

# Youth Perspectives on Participation and Inclusion In City Life Post-Disaster

A Christchurch Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the opportunities for young citizens in Christchurch to be engaged in city planning post-disaster. This qualitative study was conducted eight years after the 2010-2011 earthquakes and employed interviews with 18 young people aged between 12-24 years old, 14 of whom were already actively engaged in volunteering or participating in a youth council. It finds that despite having sought out opportunities for youth leadership and advocacy roles post-disaster, young people report frustration that they are excluded from decision-making and public life. These feelings of exclusion were described by young people as political, physical and social. Young people felt politically excluded from decision-making in the city, with some youth reporting that they did not feel listened to by decision-makers or able to make a difference. Physical exclusion was also experienced by the young people I interviewed, who reported that they felt excluded from their city and neighbourhood. This ranged from feeling unwelcome in certain parts of the city due to perceived social stratification, to actual exclusion from newly privatised areas in a post-quake recovery city. Social exclusion was reported by young people in the study in regard to their sense of marginalisation from the wider community, due to structural and social barriers. Among these, they observed a sense of prejudice towards them and other youth due to their age, class and/or ethnicity. The barriers to their participation and inclusion, and their aspirations for Christchurch post-disaster are discussed, as well as the implications of exclusion for young people's wellbeing and sense of belonging. Results of this study contribute to the literature that challenges the sole focus on children and young peoples' vulnerability post-disaster, reinforcing their capacity and desire to contribute to the recovery of their city and community (Peek, 2008). This research also challenges the narrative that young people are politically apathetic (Norris, 2004; Nissen, 2017), and adds to our understandings of the way that disasters can concentrate power amongst certain groups, in this case excluding young people generally from decision-making and public life. I conclude with some recommendations for a more robust post-disaster recovery in Christchurch, in ways that are more inclusive of young people and supportive of their wellbeing.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

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Figure 1. Damaged Christchurch road post-earthquakes in 2011

*Source: Graeme Beattie*

### 1.1 Participation and youth voice post-disaster

The aftermath of disasters can bring devastation and chaos to the people and places that they affect, but they can also open up spaces for opportunity and hope (Solnit, 2010). A period of regeneration provides a unique chance for people living in the affected areas to share their ideas and contribute to redeveloping a city that may better fit their needs and aspirations (Takazawa & Williams, 2011). However, despite this potential for optimism and participation post-disaster, many emergencies can also result instead in power being concentrated in the hands of local and central governments (Klein, 2007), with decision-making left largely to politicians and experts and limited consultation of local communities (Cretney, 2015; Hayward & Cretney, 2015).

Young people are recognised as being particularly vulnerable post-disaster (Furr, Comer, Edmunds, & Kendall 2010; Anderson, 2005), as the effects of disasters on children and youth are often heightened in terms of their emotional and psychological distress and increased risk of mental illnesses such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Self-Brown et al., 2013). While this discourse of ‘children at risk’ has been well documented in the literature (Wisner et al., 2018), many researchers also recognise the potential that youth have to participate in disaster recovery and positively influence the regeneration of their communities (Peek, 2008; Haynes & Tanner, 2015). The realisation of this potential is often yet to be fully realised ‘on the ground’, however, by decision-makers in cities that have been affected by disasters (Peek, as cited in Lahey, 2014; Seballos, Tanner, Tarazona & Gallegos, 2011) and there are few studies that examine the ongoing urban leadership of young people after disaster.

This study examines the perspectives of Christchurch young people about their own participation in decision-making and the city’s recovery eight years after the devastating earthquakes of 2010 and 2011, to understand their experiences of inclusion, wellbeing and recovery in Christchurch post-disaster.

### **1.1.1 Christchurch Earthquakes**

Christchurch, New Zealand experienced a series of 54 earthquake events over magnitude 5 between September 2010 and 2012 (Otago Daily Times, 2012), the most significant event being a magnitude 6.2 earthquake on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2011. This earthquake was the nation’s fifth-deadliest disaster. One hundred and eighty five people lost their lives, and the city and surrounding suburbs were badly damaged, with thousands of aftershocks continuing over subsequent years (New Zealand History, 2017). Almost eight years on and the central city is slowly being rebuilt, although damage is still evident, and the regeneration is expected to continue for another 10 years (Hayward, 2018).

In the direct aftermath of the earthquakes, communities banded together and helped each other clean up damaged neighbourhoods that were affected by liquefaction, and with day-to-day survival

due to many services and infrastructure being down (Pickles, 2016). A group of university students created the Student Volunteer Army (SVA), and over 11 000 young people took over the streets of Christchurch to help local communities (O'Steen & Johnson, 2016; Hayward, 2013; Cretney, 2016). The SVA clocked up over 80000 volunteer hours during this period and helped to clear 360 000 tonnes of silt, using a mobile management system to prioritise and direct volunteers to the areas most in need (Bartlett, 2011). While this initiative was widely applauded both nationally and internationally for the energy and engagement of youth (New Zealand Herald, 2011; Swaffield, 2013), some local people have more recently expressed disappointment at their sense of exclusion from the regeneration, in terms of participating in the rebuild, having their views heard, and the rebuild living up to their hopes and expectations (McCrone, 2018; Farrell, 2011). Young people too, have expressed a desire to participate more in the regeneration of Christchurch, and have their voices and aspirations for the city listened to by decision-makers (Christchurch Youth Action Plan, 2017). One such indicator of local young people's desire for community engagement experiences in the city is the popularity of the CHCH101: Rebuilding Christchurch course at the University of Canterbury, developed after the earthquakes to students with service experiences related to the rebuilding of Christchurch (O'Steen & Johnson, 2016).

Decision-makers in the city have also expressed a desire to better understand young people's needs and aspirations, and to encourage their participation in the city's rebuild (Christchurch City Council, 2014):

In Christchurch's post earthquake environment it is crucial that the voices and aspirations of young people are harnessed by providing appropriate engagement opportunities to enable them to participate fully in the planning and rebuilding of our communities. Children and youth will inherit the plans made today for the rebuild of the city. It is imperative that they see themselves within this emerging environment.

This intention was also expressed in the City Council's most recent strategic plan, under the framework of *Stronger Communities* as 'valuing the voices of children and young people' (Christchurch City Council, 2017). Despite this intention, some decision-makers have also described their uncertainty about how to best consult with young people in the city (Anonymous, Personal Communication, 2018), and local government consultation of youth more generally is often not as effective as it could be (Curran, 2011). There is therefore a need to listen to the voices of young

people about their own views and aspirations for Christchurch post-earthquakes, as well their perspectives on local politics and decision-making and their own participation in the city's recovery.

## **1.2 Research purpose and objectives**

To continue to address the gaps in listening to young people's voices on the ground post-disaster (Peek, 2008), and to investigate the claim that young people desire to feel included with the Christchurch regeneration and in decision-making more generally, this thesis intends to consult with young leaders in the city about their perspectives on the rebuild and aspirations for the future of their city. In doing so, it is hoped that this research may be a starting point in understanding Christchurch young people's perspectives on local politics, their views of their communities and physical spaces post-earthquakes, as well as their visions for change during the city's regeneration that may enhance their wellbeing. More widely this thesis intends to contribute to research into the role that youth agency can play in supporting a sense of wellbeing and belonging in a city post-disaster.

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

The rationale behind this study is based upon the desire expressed by local youth, the wider community, and decision-makers alike to encourage the participation of Christchurch youth in local politics and city-building post-disaster, and to better understand their needs and aspirations. The participation of young people is beneficial for improving their sense of agency and active citizenship, and enables the wider community to recognise that young people are 'experts in their own lives' (Mason & Danby, 2011) and have much to contribute to their communities and decision-making (Peek, 2008; Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Head, 2011). Amplifying the voices of young people is also important in its own right, recognised on numerous legislative levels: internationally, in association with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); nationally, according to the Local Government Act (2002); and locally, as supported by the Christchurch Youth Action Plan (2017), and the Christchurch City Council's Strategic Plan (2017).

As this is a case study of Christchurch young leaders and hearing what young people have to say, it will be most significant on a local level, and of the greatest benefit to the Christchurch regeneration, including the local community and decision-makers. This thesis does not attempt to generalise to all young people in Christchurch, in New Zealand, or internationally, but instead represents a case study of a small number of young people in Christchurch (see Yin, 2011). However, this research will undoubtedly also prove interesting to researchers in the fields of youth civic engagement, youth and urban planning, and youth and disaster studies.

## 1.4 Research questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. How do young people view decision-making in Christchurch post-disaster and what are their perspectives on youth civic engagement?
2. What are the barriers to engaging in city life and decision-making in Christchurch that they perceive as young people?
3. How do youth perceive Christchurch as a city and the regeneration currently?
4. What are the aspirations they express for the city and its recovery?
5. What are young people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion in Christchurch post-disaster?
6. What supports and challenges do young people express related to their overall wellbeing and recovery post-disaster?



## 1.5 Defining key terms

This subsection defines the definitions that are important for this research, including youth, disaster, recovery and participation.

### 1.5.1 Youth

For the purpose of this thesis, young people or youth are defined chronologically as being between the ages of 12-24, in line with national definition by the Ministry of Youth Affairs (2002) and current practice in Christchurch youth participation groups (Youth Voice Canterbury, 2018). This thesis also follows leading scholars in youth studies who critique concepts of young people as ‘citizens-in-the-making’ or becoming citizens when they reach adulthood (Prout, 2003; Hart, 2013). It is also important to note that ‘youth’ do not present a homogenous group of people (United Nations, 2011) and that care has been taken to emphasise this while presenting the findings of the interviews. For reasons outlined in Chapter 3 on Methodology, this study involves research with young people aged between 12-24 in accordance with the above definitions.

### 1.5.2 Disaster

Defining disaster is important as a frame for this research. In an extensive review of the disaster literature, Winkworth (2007) defines a disaster as having the following characteristics:

A situation created by major events rather than the event itself, and especially the social, economic, developmental and political consequences of events which is the key defining aspect of disasters. A disaster exceeds the capacity of the ‘community’ to respond and requires a coordinated response by the State and other entities to help the community recover. Disasters are also events which are shared by a group of people who develop an identity that together they have been affected by major catastrophe.

The Christchurch earthquakes of 2010-2011 share all of these components of disaster, as defined above. Research often focuses on either pre-disaster, disaster, or post-disaster (recovery) contexts, and this case study is situated in Christchurch post-disaster in 2018, several years after the 2011 earthquakes.

### 1.5.3 Recovery

The term 'recovery' can be a controversial term, with multiple meanings associated with its use. Broadly, the term recovery has been defined as both an outcome and a process. Recovery as an outcome refers to the restoration of 'the level of social, physical and economic functioning that existed before the disaster' (Winkworth, 2007). More recent literature has critiqued this outcome view of recovery, claiming that it is impossible to return to the way things were before the disaster, that the people and places are 'forever changed' (Mannakkara, 2014) and a more desirable perspective of recovery is instead 'to seize a 'window of opportunity' opened by a disaster to create a greater sense of place among residents; a stronger, more diverse economy, and a more economically integrated and diverse population' (Winkworth, 2007).

Recovery as a transformative process, more than just restorative, is advocated for in the literature in the domains of transforming 'the individual, the community, and the built, economic and natural environments' (ibid). New Zealand's 'framework for an integrated and holistic recovery' is shown in Figure 2 below:



**Figure 2      New Zealand's framework for integrated and holistic recovery  
(Norman, 2006, p.17)**

In this view of recovery by Norman (2006), the community should be placed at the centre of recovery efforts, with the natural, social, built and economic environments shown to interconnect and be essential aspects of community regeneration. This holistic perspective on disaster recovery has been assumed throughout this research.

As Winkworth (2007) establishes in his review:

Community recovery is increasingly depicted as a gradual process over time in which concepts such as 'closure', so often referred to by the media and others, have very little, if any, useful place. Instead, various aspects of grief alternate and reemerge with unexpected intensity, particularly with anniversaries and other significant events (Rando, 1993). At the same time people usually begin to reengage with a world which for most people is forever transformed by loss (Stroebe & Schut, 2001).

It is the view of recovery as a gradual process, rather than an outcome in itself, that will also be utilised in this thesis, and recovery will be used interchangeably in places with the word 'regeneration', as the recovery process of Christchurch is referred to locally post-disaster (Regenerate, 2017). A number of authors have noted the importance of an inclusive approach to recovery planning, one that enables young voices in particular to be heard in decision making (Peek, 2008; Mitchell, Tanner & Haynes, 2009; Cumiskey et al., 2015) for reasons we will examine later in this discussion.

#### **1.5.4 Youth Participation**

Frank (2006) regards the term 'youth participation' as multifaceted, representing 'an ideology, a basic human right, a factor in young people's development and a component of a healthy democracy'. The term is often used interchangeably with 'youth engagement' in the literature. Hart (1992) has succinctly defined youth participation as 'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives'. He also describes the struggle for equal rights and the significance of power relations as essential to consider when researching the participation of young people (ibid).

Another useful definition by Batsleer (2008) further extends Hart's concept of youth participation by addressing some of the aspects involved with the participation of young people in practice:

Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity – and where necessary the support – to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.

It is these complementary definitions of youth participation by Frank (2006), Hart (1992) and Batsleer (2008) that will be adopted for the purpose of this thesis.

## 1.6 Christchurch context

A short introduction to Christchurch is necessary to situate this study in its context. In alignment with the layout of this thesis, I will briefly introduce the city in terms of the geography of Christchurch, the people and communities, and the politics of Christchurch. Note that this is by no means a comprehensive account of Christchurch, and only information deemed relevant background knowledge for this thesis has been included.

### 1.6.1 Geography

Christchurch is the largest city in the South Island of New Zealand, and the third largest in all of New Zealand behind Auckland and Wellington. Its Māori name is Ōtautahi ('the place of Tautahi'), and it is home to the Ngāi Tahu iwi of the South Island. After colonisation by English settlers in 1850, Christchurch was originally built on swampland by The Canterbury Company, and was desired to be an Anglican city and a distinctly British city (Schollmann, Perkins & Moore, 2000). The Avon river runs through the centre of the city, and Christchurch has become known as 'the Garden City' for its many gardens, parks and trees. Neo-gothic architecture and the many gardens and parks have been argued to still reflect colonisers desire for Christchurch to be a 'Better Britain', with the Māori and Ngāi Tahu history of the region largely washed over (Rice & Sharfe, 2008). The earthquakes have been spoken of as a chance to give the Māori history of Ōtautahi its rightful visibility in the city again (McDonald, 2018a).

### 1.6.2 People

Christchurch is situated in the Canterbury region of New Zealand, and contains an estimated 381,800 residents (Stringer, 2018). While the city suffered a notable decrease in population post-earthquakes, numbers have risen again by more than 40,000 residents since the last census was conducted in 2013 (Statistics NZ, 2013). The boundaries of Christchurch are shown in Figure 3 below (Christchurch City Council, 2016).

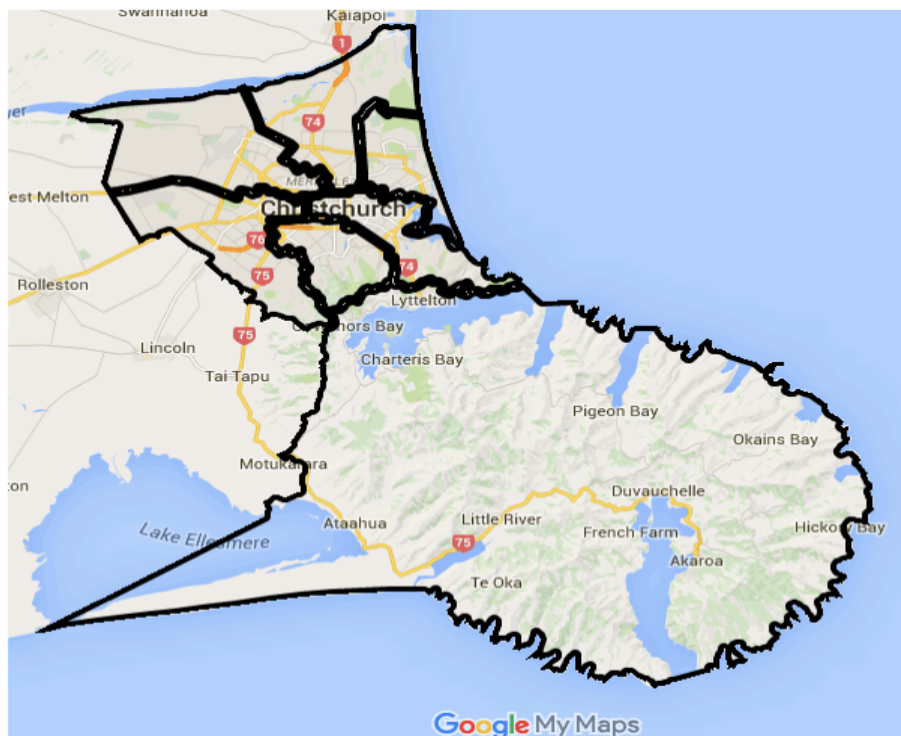


Figure 3. A Map of Christchurch

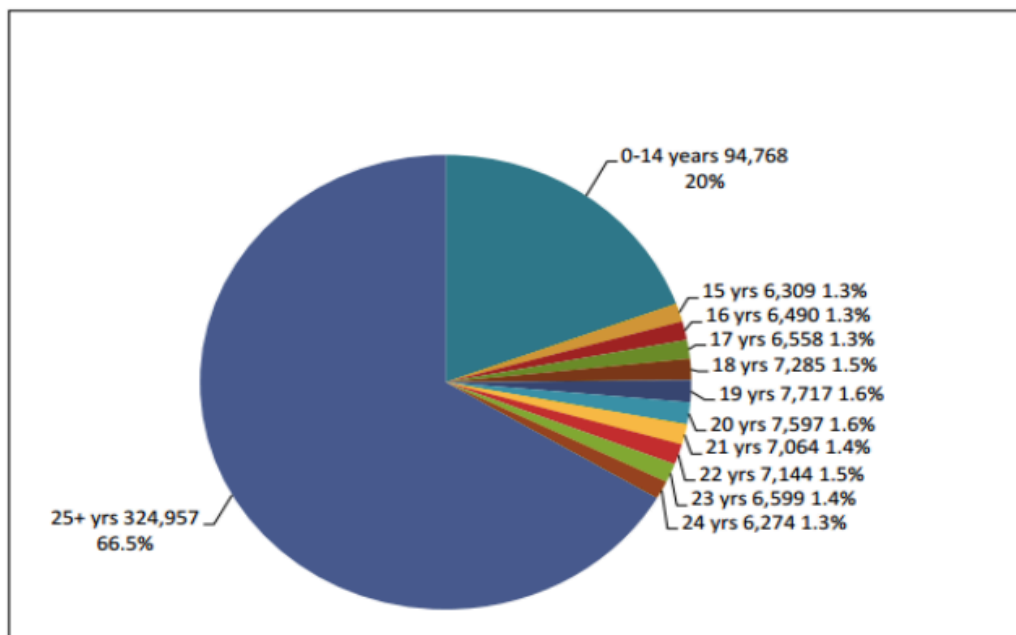
At the time of the 2013 census, Christchurch was less diverse in terms of ethnicity compared to the New Zealand average. 83.9% identified as European, less than the national average of 74%, and 8.5% identified as Māori, less than the national average of 14.9%. People identifying as Pacifica, Asian, or Middle Eastern, Latin American, or African (MELAA) were also less than New Zealand averages, and these percentages are represented in Table 1 (Statistics NZ, 2013) below:

Table 1. Ethnic Groups in Christchurch as of the 2013 Census

2013 Census		
Ethnic group(1)	Christchurch City (percent)	New Zealand (percent)
European	83.9	74.0
Māori	8.5	14.9
Pacific peoples	3.1	7.4
Asian	9.4	11.8
Middle Eastern, Latin American, African	1.0	1.2

Statistics NZ, 2013

Approximately one third of the Canterbury population are children or young people aged between 0 – 24 years, just over 160 000. These figures are represented in Figure 4 below (CDHB, 2010).



CDHB, 2010

Figure 4. Child and Youth Ages in Canterbury

The ethnic identities of children and youth in Christchurch are more diverse than adults, with fewer Europeans, and more young Māori, Pasifika, and Asian young people living in Christchurch. Figure 5 below shows the ethnic breakdown of Christchurch residents aged between 12-24 (Statistics NZ, 2013).

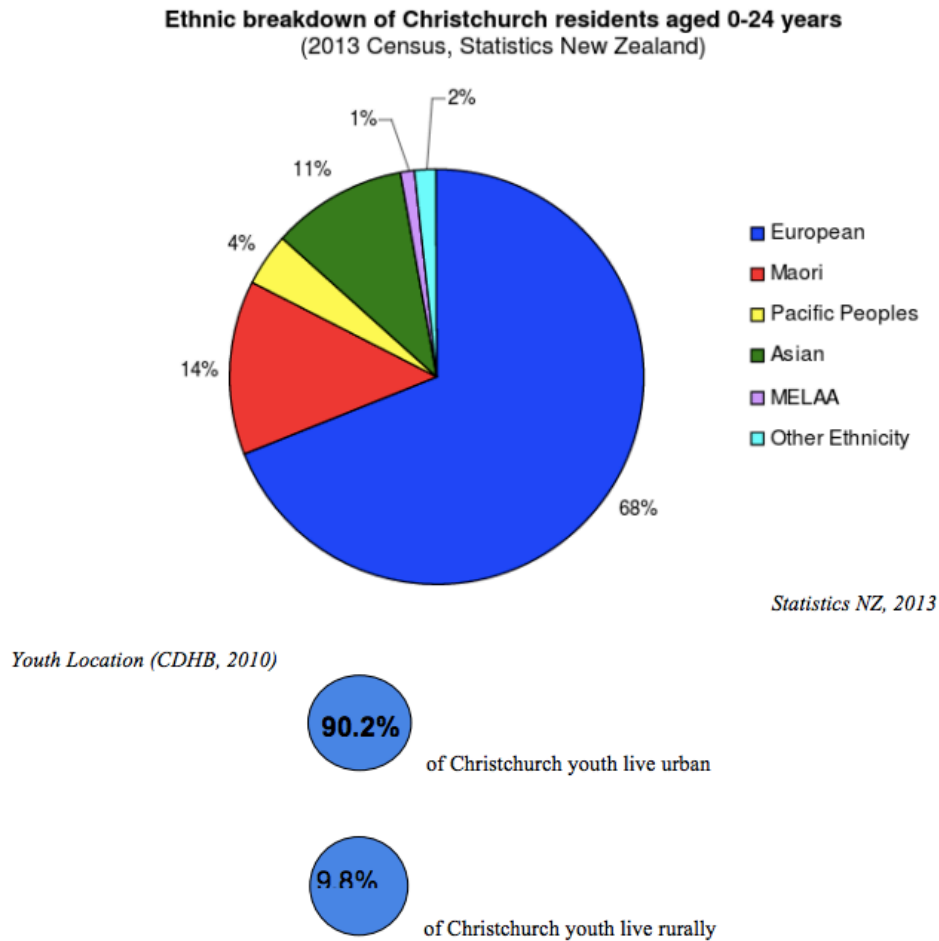


Figure 5. Ethnicities of Christchurch Children and Youth

### 1.6.3 Politics

In terms of political structure in Christchurch, the Christchurch City Council (CCC) and Environment Canterbury (ECan) are the main local decision-making bodies, with seven wards around the city under the governance of Community Boards. Just prior to the earthquake and in the aftermath of disaster there was significant political restructuring which resulted in changes and challenges for local voting and representation (Hayward, 2015). Post-earthquakes, the local city council itself was



overtaken and local representation largely swept aside, replaced by the central government Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA). This became a source of contention in Christchurch, leading to much debate and anger over the exclusion of the community and local governance structures in initial phases of disaster recovery and regeneration (McDonald, 2018b; The Guardian, 2014; Ogilvie, 2013; NZ Herald, 2015).

While the Christchurch City Council initially ran a very successful 'Share an Idea' campaign after the earthquakes (Mathewson, 2013), with over 100 000 submissions from the community about what people would like to see in the new Christchurch, tension developed as CERA took over from the city council and experts produced a new blueprint for the city in 100 days, which contained some elements of what the community wanted yet omitted others (Farrell, 2015). The blueprint for the city is shown in Figure 6 below:

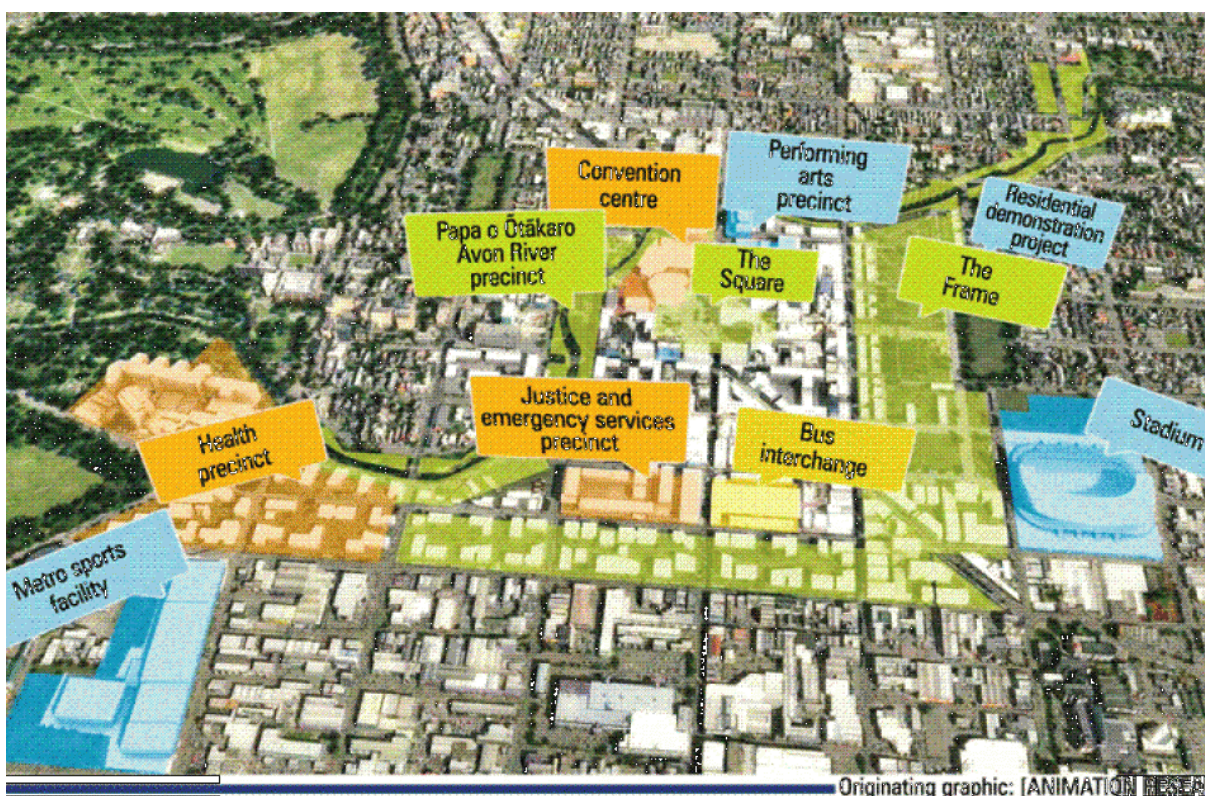


Figure 6. Christchurch Central blueprint



Despite contention over the blueprint, as of 2018 the central city is slowly beginning to be regenerated, with businesses moving back into the centre of Christchurch, new buildings appearing, and some vibrancy and energy returning. There is however still much debate about how the city should progress and whose voices should be heard (McCrone, 2017; Farrell, 2015)

In terms of young people's political participation in Christchurch, there are a number of small formal youth participation groups in the city, including the Christchurch Youth Council (CYC, independent of CCC) and PYLAT (Pacific Youth Leadership and Transformation). These groups were established to advocate for young people's participation in Christchurch and amplify youth voices, providing advice to local councils and other decision-making bodies and encouraging young people's active citizenship (Christchurch Youth Council, 2018; PYLAT, 2018). More in-depth analysis of the local politics of Christchurch and the city's blueprint is beyond the scope of this study, which focuses instead on understanding a number of young people's perspectives from the aforementioned youth participation groups in the city regarding their participation in the city's recovery.

## 1.7 Thesis outline

This thesis will progress over seven chapters. In Chapter Two, I outline the literature of youth participation, including participation as a right, models of youth participation and the discourse of youth apathy that has emerged in the media and some scholarly work. I also describe the benefits and enablers to youth participation, as well as the barriers to this. The literature on youth participation in urban planning, and youth participation post-disaster is then examined, followed by the research that has been done locally on youth in Christchurch post-disaster. Overall, focus in the literature on youth vulnerability after disasters is beginning to shift to examine the 'infinite potential' (Peek, as cited in Lahey, 2014) of young people to be involved with the regeneration efforts of their cities, and the benefits this participation has for young people's wellbeing and recovery.

Chapter Three explains the methodology employed for this study, including my research approach as a qualitative case study. I cover my methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical considerations taken into account when conducting this research. This study employed twelve

interviews and two focus groups with a total of eighteen young people aged between 12-24, and data was analysed using thematic analysis and a predominantly iterative approach.

Chapter Four then turns to report on the findings that emerged from the interviews. Here I discuss young people's views and visions for local politics and decision-making, as well as their own engagement. A sense of exclusion and frustrated agency begins to emerge in this chapter surrounding the difficulties young people have in participating in the Christchurch recovery and being listened to by decision-makers.

Chapter Five deals with young people's perceptions of Christchurch post-earthquakes and the regeneration of the city. Their views of their own communities and Christchurch more broadly are detailed, as well as their aspirations for the spaces around them as they are being rebuilt. Aspects of place that they described as particularly challenging of their recovery, and supportive of their recovery, are presented in this chapter, and young people's sense of exclusion from the physical space around them continues to emerge in this chapter.

Chapter Six finally discusses young people's perceptions of the people and community in Christchurch after the earthquakes, the challenges that they perceive for themselves and others, and their aspirations moving forward. A sense of social exclusion is described in this chapter by young people interviewed, along with their desire that Christchurch people be placed at the heart of regeneration efforts and feel that they are included in the city, accepted, and feel as though they belong.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by summarising the findings and discussion, and making recommendations for a more robust recovery in Christchurch post-disaster that is empowering of young people and supportive of their agency and wellbeing. I then outline some limitations of the study and suggest areas for future research moving forward.

## 1.8 Summary

This chapter has introduced the topic of young people post-disaster, and outlined the Christchurch context post-earthquakes that this study will be situated within. I have detailed the background to this research about the need for more youth voices to be heard in Christchurch during the regeneration period as well as a deeper understanding of youth perspectives and aspirations for decision-making and city-building post-disaster. The rationale for this study and research objectives have been referred to, as well as my six research questions that I will focus on. Overall, this thesis seeks to understand young people's perspectives of Christchurch post-disaster and their aspirations for the future, for themselves, their community, their city, and for local politics and decision-making. The following chapter will examine the literature about youth participation, youth in urban planning, and youth in post-disaster contexts in further detail.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

### *Youth Participation and Inclusion in Urban Planning Post-Disaster*

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#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the existing literature relevant to this analysis of the perspectives of young people in post-disaster recovery in Christchurch and their participation in urban planning. Having introduced the topic of young people post-disaster and defined the key terms of youth, disaster, recovery and participation, I will now outline the relevant literature for this research. First, I examine the central aspects of youth participation, in terms of participation as a right, models of youth participation, the discourse of 'apathetic youth', and the benefits and barriers to youth participation. Following this, I focus on the literature of youth participation specifically in the context of urban planning and post-disaster environments (Peek, 2008). Finally, I examine what is already known about young people in Christchurch specifically in post-disaster planning in terms of their aspirations for the city, their wellbeing and recovery, and what enables or inhibits their local participation.

#### 2.2 Youth participation in planning

In this subsection, I briefly review some of the significant points raised in the literature about youth participation. Specifically, I outline young people's right to participation, models of participation, the discourse of youth apathy, and the benefits and barriers to youth participation as described in current research.

### 2.2.1 Participation as a Right

One common way in which youth participation in urban planning is framed in the literature is through a rights-based approach, in the wake of children and young people's right to participation being formally recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. As an international piece of legislation drafted by the United Nations, the UNCRC outlines the rights of children and young people all over the world as essential for countries to realise in order to enable the youngest members of society to live healthy, happy and just lives. Hart (1997) states that:

The UNCRC offers two complementary views of children: less powerful and less competent than adults and therefore in need of certain kinds of protection, and oppressed or constrained and hence needing more opportunities for self-determination.

Hart (1997) outlines how supporting young people's participation and right to have a voice can improve both the protective and self-determinative aspects of young people's lives. The most relevant Article in the UNCRC for the purposes of this thesis is Article 12, referring to children and young people's right to participate and express their views on all matters that affect them, as stated below:

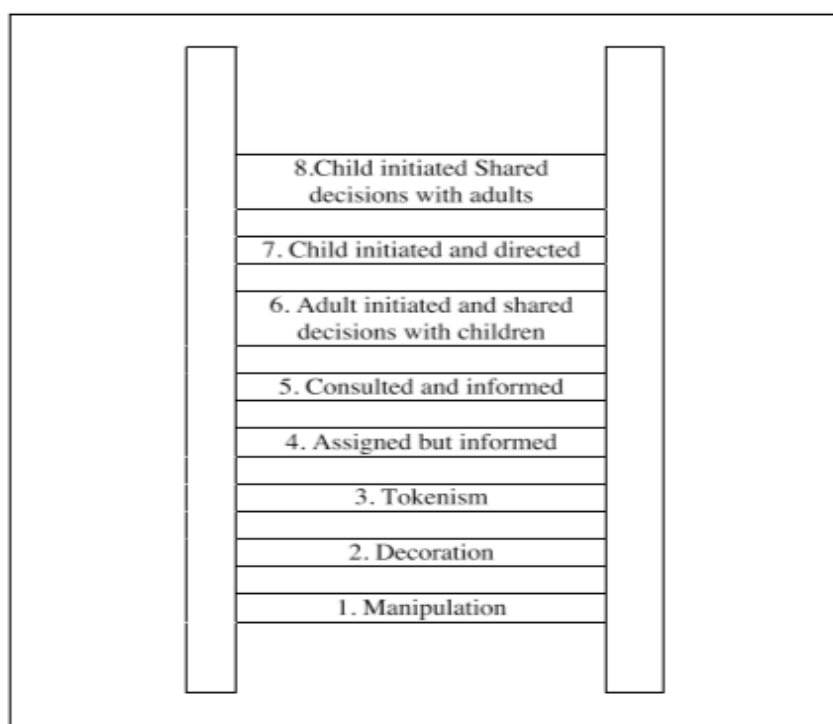
Article 12: State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

*U.N. General Assembly resolution 44/25, 1989.*

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has determined that the clause "state parties shall assure" is a legal obligation, rather than simply to be encouraged (Lansdown, 2014). They have also broadly defined "all matters affecting the child", recognising that young people "are affected by most areas of public policy including, for example, macro-economics, environment, transport, and social protection" (ibid). New Zealand ratified this convention in 1993, and this is thus the guiding legislation on youth participation both nationally and internationally.

## 2.2.2 Models of Youth Participation

Models of participation have been developed over the last half century as a tool for greater understanding of the participation of citizens in community building and decision-making. Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (1969) was one of the earlier models of participation. Hart adapted this into his 1997 model of children's participation that is still used widely today. It is shown in Figure 7 below.



**Figure 7. Hart's Ladder of Participation (Source: Adapted from Hart, 1997)**

This model shows differing levels of inclusion of young people in decision-making, starting from the lowest levels of manipulation, decoration, and tokenism, moving upwards through to child-initiated shared decisions with adults. It is not intended to imply that youth participation should operate only at the highest rungs, but Hart (1997) rather emphasised the importance of choice, with young people deciding their level of participation for themselves. Although this model has been critiqued for its Western-centrism and some scholars have argued the top rung should be youth empowerment without the aid of adults (McCreedy and Dilworth, 2014), the model remains useful for examining children and young people's participation in practice (Frank, 2006).

Another common model in use in the literature on youth participation is Shier's Pathways to Participation (2001), which is more focused on ensuring decision-makers are including the voices of young people within their organisations. It is shown in Figure 8 below.

Levels of participation	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
5. Children share power and responsibility for making decision-making	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.	Are you ready to let children join your decision making process?	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decisions making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decisions making processes?
3. Children's views are taken into account.	Are you ready to take children's views into account?	Does your decision making process enable you to taken children's views in to account?	Is it a policy requirement that's children's views must be given due weight in decisions making?
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?
1. Children are listened to.	Are you ready to listen to children?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

**Figure 8. Pathways to Participation (Source: Adapted from Shier, 2001)**

The model shows five levels of participation and asks a series of questions to decision-makers, concerning the openings, opportunities and obligations about involving young people.

Both Hart and Shier's models of participation are still widely used in research concerning youth participation (Frank, 2006), and remain useful for establishing the ways that decision-makers

include or exclude young people, and the extent to which this participation is meaningful and effective.

### 2.3.3 'Apathetic Youth?'

The literature about youth participation in urban planning is also noted for debate about the discourse that young people are apathetic and are not interested in engaging in decision-making and their communities more widely (Youniss et al., 2002; Henn, Weinstein and Forrest, 2005). This has arisen largely due to declining voter participation and party membership of young people around the world (Cammaerts et al., 2014), and led to concern about youth apathy amongst academics, politicians and even young people themselves (Nissen, 2017). Franklin (2004) puts this anxiety partially down to the fear that generations of 'civic-minded' citizens will be replaced by a younger generation that cares less for politics and wider society, and democracy may be weakened as a result. In New Zealand, a number of initiatives have been created to address this perceived apathy and promote greater electoral turnout amongst youth, including RockEnrol and Get Up Stand Up (Tawhai, 2015). However, emerging research shows that these projects may be 'missing the point' (Nissen, 2017).

While some scholars have placed the blame for youth apathy entirely on young people themselves and their own choices and lack of interest (Russell, 2004), existing literature points to other explanations for the declining electoral participation of younger generations. One theory is that young people are experiencing broadening disillusionment with formal politics, unhappy with the way that politics is being conducted in the twenty first century and the lack of positive change occurring (Godfrey, 2016). Another growing theory is that young people are not apathetic, but are rather engaging in political action in different ways (Norris, 2002; Dalton, 2008).

Against this background of debate amongst agency theorists, a third stream of agency theory has emerged. This literature suggests that contemporary political participation among young people has not so much declined, but rather switched focus to other repertoires of political action (Norris, 2002; Dalton, 2008; Pattie et al., 2003). These theorists are less inclined to interpret declining electoral participation as a problem. Instead, these scholars trace a process of what they suggest is democratic disaggregation, in which other types of political activity have increased or remained



static as traditional forms of participation have decreased. One of the most vivid descriptions of this alleged shift in political action is Pippa Norris' (2003) notion of a 'democratic phoenix'. While participation in formal politics may be declining, Norris has claimed that new possibilities for civic engagement are emerging that supplement traditional forms of participation. Following the metaphor of a 'democratic phoenix', political engagement is claimed to not so much be dying, but rather being reborn in different forms (Norris, 2002). A final theory counters the narrative that young people are not interested in engaging with traditional politics, claiming instead that traditional political systems are inherently unengaging to young people, and it is these systems that must be transformed to allow for better participation of younger generations (Hay, 2007; Farthing, 2010).

In Nissen's (2017) dissertation on the politics of New Zealand university students, she strongly critiques the idea that young people are apathetic, and argues that the political agency of students needs to be understood in their own context. There is growing evidence that youth have strong opinions, "want to express their views, can do so lucidly and actively seek to be listened to" (Ipsos MORI Young Edinburgh Viewfinder 3 Research Project 2008; Nissen, 2017).

### **2.3.4 Benefits and Enablers of Participation**

There is ample scholarship proclaiming the importance of youth participation, and the benefits and enablers to this in modern society (Batsleer, 2008). This section will briefly outline the major benefits considered in the literature, as well as the enablers that have been found to support and encourage the participation of young people in decision-making.

#### ***Benefits of Youth Participation***

The benefits of youth participation have been widely documented in the literature, and include a range of benefits from the developmental to political, for both young people themselves, decision-makers and the wider community. Research has shown that youth participation can lead to greater attachment to place (Wildfield, 2013), an increase in active citizenship (Bessant, 2004), increased confidence and feelings of empowerment (Zeldin, Camino and Calvert, 2011), as well as youth civic capacity and political literacy (Checkoway, Allison & Montoya, 2005). Youth participation has also

demonstrated benefits of improved self-efficacy (Oliver, Collin, Burns & Nicholas, 2006), and resiliency (Zeldin et al., 2013). In addition to this, there are strong relationships between youth participation and improved connections to both people and places, leading to feelings of inclusion and a stronger sense of community and belonging (Oliver, Collin, Burns and Nicholas, 2006).

A number of studies have also documented the positive benefits of youth participation for decision-makers:

Adult partners often report a renewed sense of purpose in their work, a more holistic view of youth's interests and abilities, and increased confidence in their ability to effectively work with youth (Zeldin, 2004; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). Perhaps most critically, organizations and communities that integrate youth voice often report greater clarity of purpose, develop programs that are better aligned with youth needs, and enhance the sustainability of youth-focused projects (e.g. Rajani, 2001; Zeldin, 2004).

Price, 2011

As well this, incorporating youth perspectives into policies and programs that impact upon young people directly improves those very policies and programs (Cavet and Sloper, 2004). Youth participation can also benefit wider society, through 'a broadening of civic activity and contributions to citizenship' (Zeldin, Camino & Calvert, 2012), also linked to 'enhancing democracy and providing training and experience for leaders of the future' (Head, 2011). In a review on youth participation, Frank (2006) claims that the benefits of youth participation can even outweigh those of adult participation, due to the rapid changes young people are undergoing in their social and psychological development.

### ***Enablers of Youth Participation***

Participation can take many different forms, and not all participation of young people and inclusion within decision-making processes is considered equal. Frank (2006) states that 'effective participation must actuate meaningful opportunities, resources and means of support, enabling young people to remain engaged and exert influence individually and collectively'. Thus, participation importantly not only requires young people to speak, but decision-makers to listen to them (Lundy, 2013). In Laura Lundy's 2013 paper, 'Voice is not enough', she outlines a new model

of child participation that demonstrates ‘youth voice’ as only one aspect of their meaningful engagement. She argues for the importance of giving youth the space to express their views, an audience to listen to them, and these views actually influencing the decisions that are made. This model is shown in Figure 9 below:

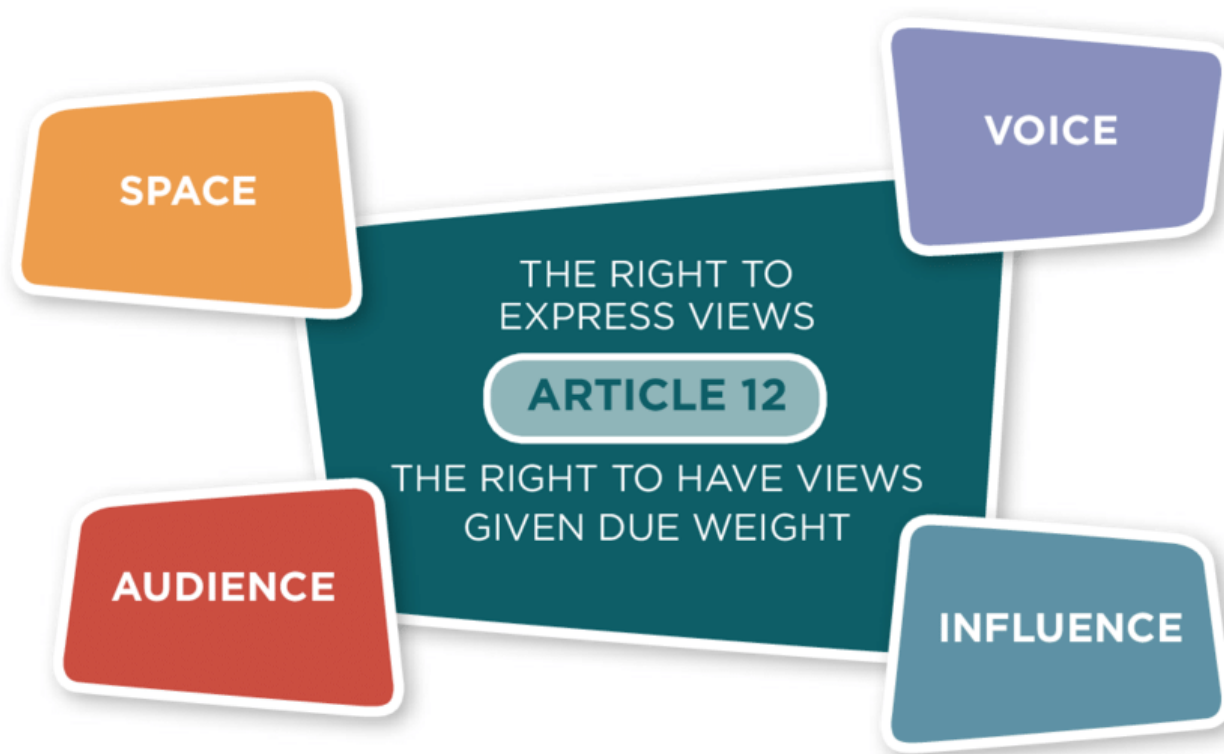


Figure 9. Lundy's model of child participation (2013)

In addition to this, Frank (2006) analysed empirical studies of youth participation and highlighted five lessons from the literature:

1. Give young people responsibility and voice in the planning process.
2. Build young people's capacity to participate in the form of knowledge, skills and confidence.
3. Encourage youthful styles of working, particularly working techniques that are "social, dynamic, interactive, expressive, constructive and challenging".
4. Involve adults throughout the process.
5. Adapt the socio-political context to maximise decision-makers responsiveness by involving officials and community leaders early in the process.

(Frank, 2006)

The most common theme occurring around enablers of meaningful youth participation in the literature concerns the relationships between young people and decision-makers, and the importance of both youth and adults connecting and working together (Frank, 2006; Stringer, 2018). In line with Hart's Ladder of Participation, many scholars in the post-disaster literature in particular argue for the importance of connection and cooperation between young people, decision-makers, and the wider community; relationships they state are necessary in order to create meaningful change (Bartlett, 2008).

### **2.3.5 Barriers to Participation**

Despite the benefits of youth participation being well-documented in the literature, there are also many barriers to young people participating in decision-making, and to this participation being meaningful and effective. Curran states that 'Frequently children and young people are the first to be excluded from participation', and Hart, Biggeri and Babic (2014) discuss how participation of youth has tended to be consultative and tokenistic; that young people may be able to voice their opinions at best, but they have not been afforded enough opportunities to meaningfully engage in decision-making. The barriers that prevent young people from taking part in public life are less well understood (Matthews, 2001). As stated by Frank (2006):

The fact that youth participation in planning has been promoted for three decades yet remains uncommon and unsupported in comparison to adult participation suggests that there are significant barriers to the practice (Checkoway, Pothukuchi, & Finn, 1995; Adams & Ingham, 1998).

Lansdown (2014) reiterates this:

While new initiatives often set forth broad goals for public participation, the realization of children's rights to participate and meaningfully contribute to decision-making is isolated and inconsistent. In order to achieve the goals of Article 12 of the CRC, "the task ahead is to address the power balance between adults and children to afford all children definitive opportunities to take action to influence their own lives."

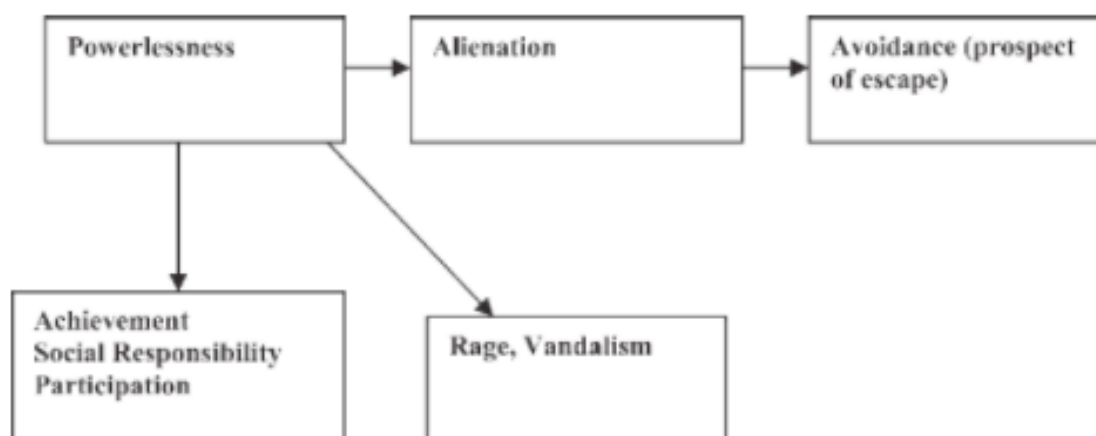
Some of the main barriers that are discussed in the literature are presented in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Barriers to youth participation**

<b>Barriers to youth participation</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Youth don't view themselves as a group that can create change (internal efficacy)	Checkoway (2011)
Youth don't think participating will make a difference (external efficacy)	Checkoway (2011)
Uncertainty about how to participate	Checkoway (2011)
Adultism – adult's perceptions of superiority to young people	Checkoway (2011)
Decision-making dominated by other competing interests	Knowles-Yanez (2005)
Lack of understanding of young people by decision-makers and wider society	Frank (2006)
<p>Stereotypes of youth and societal views such as:</p> <p>Vulnerable – lacking the power of adults, needing to be looked after</p> <p>Legal - not yet entitled to participate</p> <p>Developmental - not developed enough, lack of maturity</p>	<p>Baldassari, Hart, and Lockett (1980); Checkoway, Pothukuchi, and Finn (1995); Simpson (1997); Matthews, Limb, and Taylor (1999); Francis and Lorenzo (2002); Hill et al. (2004)</p>

Romantic – romanticised perspectives of young people that lead to ineffectual participation	
Lack of training on youth participation and engagement in governance	Freeman and Aitken-Rose (2005)
Power relations and hierarchical structures of local councils makes inclusiveness of youth difficult	Hampton (1999)
Budget constraints and lack of resources	Curran (2011)

When youth attempt to participate, yet their voices are not listened to, this leads to a sense of frustrated agency and a reduced likelihood of them continuing to engage with their local community and decision-makers (Hayward, 2012). This sense of exclusion from decision-making and wider society can contribute to feelings of powerlessness (Lister, 2007), and the model in Figure 10 below presents strategies young people may use to manage these feelings:



**Figure 10.** Different individual and social strategies to manage powerlessness feelings.

It is therefore important to examine youth participation further, particularly from the perspectives of young people themselves (Head, 2011), and in settings where research is only beginning to

expand on young people's participation post-disaster (Peek, 2008). The following sections will examine what is known about youth participation in post-disaster contexts, before turning specifically to relevant studies concerning young people in Christchurch after the earthquakes.

## 2.4 Youth Participation Post-Disaster

Disasters are discussed in the literature as having both negative and positive effects. Along with the destruction of built and natural environments, disasters are economically costly, and politically challenging to deal with. The negative effects of disasters on people and community networks has been well documented in the literature, particularly in terms of mental health. As Winkworth (2007) discusses:

The work of Moore et al., (2004) after Hurricane Floyd supported other research which shows that the upsurge of mutual assistance and solidarity that can overtake whole communities in the immediate wake of a disaster is of a temporary nature. Later phases are often characterised by a general lack of concern for others and feelings of neglect by government authorities. Mental health professionals report similar sequential reactions to disasters – “a period of heroic unity and mutual support followed by a period of disillusionment and anger” (Moore, Daniel et al, 2004, p. 213).

However, disasters can have positive impacts too, and the struggle of recovery post-disaster can yield “remarkable transformation and positive growth” (Walsh, 2007). Five areas of positive change that can result from disasters were documented by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996; 2004):

- The emergence of new opportunities and possibilities
- Deeper relationships and greater compassion for others
- Feeling strengthened to meet future life challenges
- Reordered priorities and fuller appreciation of life
- Deepening spirituality

This section first turns to young people and their participation specifically in post disaster contexts, before addressing youth participation and youth perspectives in Christchurch after the 2010-2011 earthquakes.

### 2.4.1 Youth in Disaster Recovery

In Peek's (2008) literature review on children and disasters, she describes the prominence of approaches to examining youth after disasters mainly in terms of their vulnerability. Much research has led to a 'risk discourse' (Gill, Gulsvig & Peek, 2008) focusing on the increase of youth mental health issues after disasters, especially PTSD (Anderson, 2005), young people's compromised social relationships, development, and their sense of security and safety (McDermott et al., 2005). However, a new wave of literature is arguing for young people's participation post-disaster (Peek, 2008; Peek et al., 2018), and that not only do youth have the capacity to 'actively contribute to planning, preparedness, response and recovery efforts', but that there are 'positive mental health benefits of this involvement' (Gibbs, Mutch, O'Connor & MacDougall, 2013).

A study by Fletcher et al. (2016) examined the perspectives of young people during recovery from disaster. The researchers identified four key messages from interviews with youth participants:

- Youth are affected by disasters in many of the same ways as adults are affected; however, young people also have unique and specific needs for youth-friendly spaces, processes, and opportunities that are often overlooked in the recovery process.
- Youth who live through disasters experience many changes in their lives— some difficult, others quite positive. The long-term effects of disasters continue to unfold during the recovery period, but many youth find creative ways to adapt and respond.
- Youth have the capacity to help their community during and after a disaster. They also often desire to help youth in other communities who have experienced a disaster.
- Youth are creative and passionate. It is important to open up spaces for them to express themselves in the ways that are most comfortable for them.

Fletcher et al., 2016

A study by Cox et al., (2017) sought to understand young people's perspectives on the people, places and activities that were beneficial to their recovery after a disaster, and in what ways these



supports benefited them. These young people came from four communities affected by disaster in the United States and Canada, and were aged between 13-22. Findings showed that in terms of people, youth valued their friends, families and communities as integral for their recovery post-disaster, providing instrumental support, psychological and emotional support, and companionship support. In terms of place, young people recognised home and school as being particularly salient places for their recovery. They also discussed the importance of formal and informal spaces for young people to gather (such as skate parks or plazas), natural environments (parks and gardens), and recreation places (community centres). Participants discussed “how these places aided in their disaster recovery by responding to physical and psychological needs (e.g., food, access to internet) and symbolic (e.g., hope, normalcy) needs and offering safe spaces for recovery” (Cox et al., 2017). Finally, activities helped to support young people’s post-disaster recovery. Participants described “hobbies, sports, exercise, extracurricular school programs, art, homework, church activities, music, shopping, writing, and work as activities they found to be particularly beneficial”, with benefits of these including ways to ‘express themselves, to reach out to others, to have fun, and to grow’ (ibid). This study has been one of the first to examine supports for young people’s recovery post-disaster from their own perspectives. However, I was unable to uncover any research with young people that addressed the challenges they face in terms of their own participation and wellbeing after a disaster.

Growing research with young people post-disaster has utilised theories of place attachment and social capital as salient aspects aiding young people’s recovery. In one study by Onstad et al., (2012), the authors viewed civic participation as one aspect of three social psychological dimensions of social capital:

- (a) a sense of community
- (b) place attachment (emotional connection to one’s neighbourhood as in the example of the attachment to the “house”), and
- (c) citizen participation (empowering community settings characterized by individuals playing meaningful roles).

Onstad et al., 2012

Social capital has been increasingly discussed in relation to community recovery from disasters, and increasing the resilience of adults and youth and their abilities to respond and participate (Marquet, 2015). Place attachment (young people's sense of connection to place) has also been growing in popularity as a theory in the literature on youth recovery post-disaster, with Scannell, Cox, Fletcher and Heykoop arguing for the importance of place-attachment in aiding children and young people's preparedness, recovery and resilience after a disaster (2016).

Peek (2008) has focused on the importance of young people's participation post-disaster, and has outlined many such international examples of this in her literature review. She has argued that to improve children's resilience to disasters, 'we must improve their access to resources, empower them by encouraging their participation, offer support, and ensure equitable treatment' (Peek, 2008). Her research has shown that young people are interested in participating post-disaster, and that many persist with engagement efforts even after discouragement from decision-makers (ibid). She says of young people: 'They're imaginative, they're creative, they have energy, they have strength and they also often have time— something that adults don't always have' (Peek, as cited in Lahey, 2014).

When young people are excluded from decision-making and regeneration efforts post-disaster, this has consequences. 'I have talked to young people who didn't get to help. Even years after a disaster happens that still stands out to them as a real wound,' Dr Peek said (Lahey, 2014). While she still believes it is essential to recognise young people's vulnerability after a disaster, she believes that not allowing them to participate can make them feel worse: 'Often, once they've made it through that most dramatic moment of the disaster what has been most challenging and harmful and hurtful was how badly they wanted to be engaged in the response and recovery efforts and how much it hurt to be turned away' (ibid).

Bartlett has discussed the commonness of civic participation post-disaster being tokenistic and superficial (2008). His research supports the need for the inclusion of young people post-disaster:

Local knowledge and experience trumped "expertise" in this case as in many others. There simply is no blueprint for a settlement that works well for children. There will always be local realities, routines and preferences that are unanticipated by outside professionals, even those who are from the same area. Without

involving the real experts—those whose lives will be affected by the decisions—there is no such thing as a truly “efficient” process.

Bartlett, 2008

The following subsection will now briefly examine young people’s participation and sense of inclusion specifically in Christchurch post-disaster, and whether this is in accordance with or contrary to the literature described above.

## **2.4.2 Youth Participation in Christchurch Post-Disaster**

There have been several studies concerning young people in Christchurch post-disaster. These include government reports, academic research and grey literature. The key findings are that while youth participation increased dramatically after the earthquakes to widespread approval locally and nationally (see O’Steen & Johnson, 2016), young people may be experiencing a growing sense of exclusion from decision-making in Christchurch, eight years on from the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes (Christchurch Youth Action Plan, 2017).

Part of the role of youth councils and youth participation groups in Christchurch is to facilitate youth participation, amplify young people’s voices and encourage young people to become active citizens (Christchurch Youth Council, 2018). Over 350 young people in Christchurch aged between 12-24 expressed in the Christchurch Youth Action Plan (YAP) that they struggled to participate in decision-making in Christchurch, although they would like to, and that they wished they felt a greater sense of belonging and inclusion in the city (2017). They desired greater connection with decision-makers and for their voices to be listened to and incorporated more into the Christchurch regeneration (ibid). In the YAP, their self-reported issues and aspirations were divided into seven themes: employment, transport, education, environment, wellbeing, representation and belonging and youth friendly spaces and places. A brief summary of key ideas under each of these themes is listed below in Table 3, as sourced from Lavea-Timo’s adaptation (2018):

Table 3. Summary of issues and aspirations of young people under the themes of the Christchurch Youth Action Plan, as adapted by Lavea-Timo (2018)

<h1>Transport</h1>	<p>Traffic challenges like unreliable public transport, lack of parking and access to driver training, expensive car ownership and not being included in decision making regarding transport hinder young people's independent mobility.</p> <p>Education, mixed-use transport methods with safe interchanges and free Wi-Fi, extended bus-times, alternative routes, subsidised travel and involving young people will help address this issue.</p>
<h1>Wellbeing</h1>	<p>Inadequate access to mental, sexual, physical health services, ongoing mental health issues post-earthquake, poor nutrition, lack of good housing and bullying reduces a young person's wellbeing. Health hubs, additional health/victim support and increased services, a diverse land-use mix and education programmes can encourage access and wellbeing.</p>

# Youth Friendly Spaces and Places

Opportunities for youth can often be restricted by spaces and places that discourage their presence, there are a lack of quality public toilets, attractions, green spaces, sporting and work spaces.

Making more youth friendly spaces, public space design through cocreation and utilising the OARC can encourage inclusion and interaction.

## Environment

Pollution, litter, food waste, climate change and unclean waterways are affecting young people's quality of life. Graffiti also has a negative reputation.

Supporting cycling and walkways, incentivising ride share systems and protection of the environment and education can help reduce pollution.

## Employment

Gender inequalities in pay, low wages, high tax rates, barriers to entry for entrepreneurs and employment hinder young people. More skills and experience-based work opportunities, tax solutions, start-up support and building employer relationships can encourage better employment outcomes.

## Representation and Belonging

Attitudes and democratic practices can restrict and discourage young people's participation. Increased resourcing/funding, co-creation of simplified documents, civics education, formal and informal interactions with

	decision makers will help foster inclusion and trust.
Education	Poor quality life skills, civics and careers education coupled with safety and financial barriers is impacting young people's education. Multi-stranded life, civics and careers education, offering Te Reo in all schools and resourcing can encourage positive educational experiences.

In CYC's 'We Speak' snapshot report (2016) where members travelled around Christchurch and surveyed 80 young people in different areas, some of the findings further demonstrated this sense of exclusion:

- 50% did not think schools did a good enough job teaching about decision-making
- 58% did not feel able to have a say in how Christchurch was run, and of Maori and Pacifica youth this rose to 78.5%
- 38% did not know who the CCC was and how it could support them
- 44% did not know the CYC was
- 50% were not aware of who to talk to if they had a problem that needed to be addressed by decision-makers

These statistics show that the struggle for young people to understand the workings of local politics and to participate, as documented in the literature, may also be occurring in Christchurch post-disaster. There is thus a need to explore more in-depth perspectives of youth in the city regarding their participation, the barriers to this, and their overall sense of inclusion and exclusion from decision-making and city-life.

## 2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on youth participation as relevant for this study. I have outlined the 'rights approach' to participation and Hart (1997) and Shier's (2001) models of youth participation. I then detailed the discourse on youth apathy and the new wave of literature that argues against this, instead identifying young people as individuals that may be disillusioned from formal politics, engaging in different ways, or as a consequence of political systems that are inherently unengaging and in need of transformation.

The benefits and barriers to young people's participation were outlined, and the consequences of youth exclusion from decision-making as leading to a sense of frustrated agency has been discussed. Research particularly concerning youth participation post-disaster is beginning to show young people's 'infinite potential' (Peek, as cited in Lahey, 2014) of being involved with the regeneration efforts of their cities, and the likely benefits of this for young people's health and wellbeing. The above research has shown there is a need for further scholarship that particularly addresses the perspectives of young people on their participation post-disaster, and what supports or challenges their inclusion in recovery processes. The research examined in this chapter has guided the methodological approach and interview questions utilised in this study, and in the following chapter I discuss the methodology employed for this research in more detail.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Methodology

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### 3.1 Introduction

My research will examine the perceptions that a group of young leaders have of Christchurch post-disaster. In particular, my objective is to understand what young people think of their city and local politics as the city goes through regeneration, what their visions are for the future, and the sense of inclusion they feel regarding their participation. The previous chapter examined the literature around youth participation in urban planning, and particularly in a recovery context after a disaster. This chapter will outline my approach to research as an “interpretivist” case study, that is qualitative in nature, and justify the reasoning behind this approach (Nissen, 2017). I will describe the demographics of the interview participants, and detail my approach to data collection of a mixture of depth interviews and focus groups. I then outline my use of thematic analysis during the data analysis stage, justifying the validity of my results, and document the ethical considerations I will follow during the research process with young people.

### 3.2 Research approach

This thesis will utilise a qualitative and interpretivist approach to research to understand young people’s perceptions of Christchurch post-disaster, through a case study design of young leaders. This section describes the approach taken to answer the research questions, describing the advantages and disadvantages while justifying their selection over other methodology.



### 3.2.1 Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods are suited to deep exploration of data that allows for evaluation of individual's perspectives, attitudes, insights and aspirations (Davidson and Tolich, 2003). Qualitative research enables researchers to go beyond explanations of what is happening, to how and why it may be happening (Harrison, McGibbon & Morton, 2001), and is more inductive and naturalistic than quantitative research (Blaxter et al., 1996). Pierce (2008) has argued in particular for the salience of qualitative methodology in the field of political science, believing it to be "best suited to the study, understanding and explanation of the complexities of social and political life".

Compared to quantitative research, qualitative methodologies can be more time-consuming with results that are more subjective and open to interpretation by the researcher (Pierce, 2008). Despite this, qualitative research is most suited to this study due to its ability to uncover in-depth information, and explore in detail the perceptions and attitudes of participants. The research questions will be most suitably answered by qualitative methodology, and depth interviews and focus groups have thus been selected as the principle method of research for this thesis.

### 3.2.2 Interpretivist

This thesis is situated within an interpretivist paradigm. Hay (2011) defines this as a research approach where citizen's perspectives are placed at the heart of research, and their own perceptions, attitudes and aspirations are given salience (see Nissen, 2017). Conducting my research in this way will enable the perspectives of young people to sit at the forefront of my thesis, achieving one of the research objectives of amplifying the voices of young people and recognising their inherent value.

This study employs an inductive approach to research analysis, whereby resulting categories and concepts are respondent-led, and derived primarily from the data. This is unlike deductive research which typically tests hypotheses and existing theories against the data. However, aspects of deductive theory will also be incorporated into data analysis, to mitigate the critiques of Schor (2007) and Hay (2002) that inductive research on its own can oversimplify data and overlook the

participants surrounding context and macro-environments. In line with the approach of Nissen (2017), current literature and theories will therefore also be drawn upon when presenting the data, in an iterative method that Bryman explains as ‘weaving back and forth between data and theory’.

### **3.2.3 Case study**

In addition to being qualitative and interpretivist, this thesis takes a case study approach to research. Yin (2003) defines a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context”, with the contemporary phenomenon in this thesis being young leader’s voices and aspirations, and the real life context being Christchurch during the recovery period of the 2011 earthquakes. While this approach is ideal for a detailed and in-depth analysis of a single phenomenon (Bryman, 2016), as in this study, Henn at al. (2006) argues that researchers must be aware of potential ‘weakness of claims’ and generalisations when presenting results. Because of this, this thesis will not attempt to generalise results from this study out to the wider population of young people, but rather aim to present a detailed analysis of the case in question, discussing the themes that emerged from interviews with the 18 young people who participated in this study.

## **3.3 Participants**

A snapshot of the participant’s demographic information will be presented in this section, including their age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, and time spent in Christchurch. This information was obtained from a short questionnaire given out at the beginning of the interviews. In addition, I will describe the way that participants were sampled for the study using snowball sampling.

### **3.3.1 Sampling**

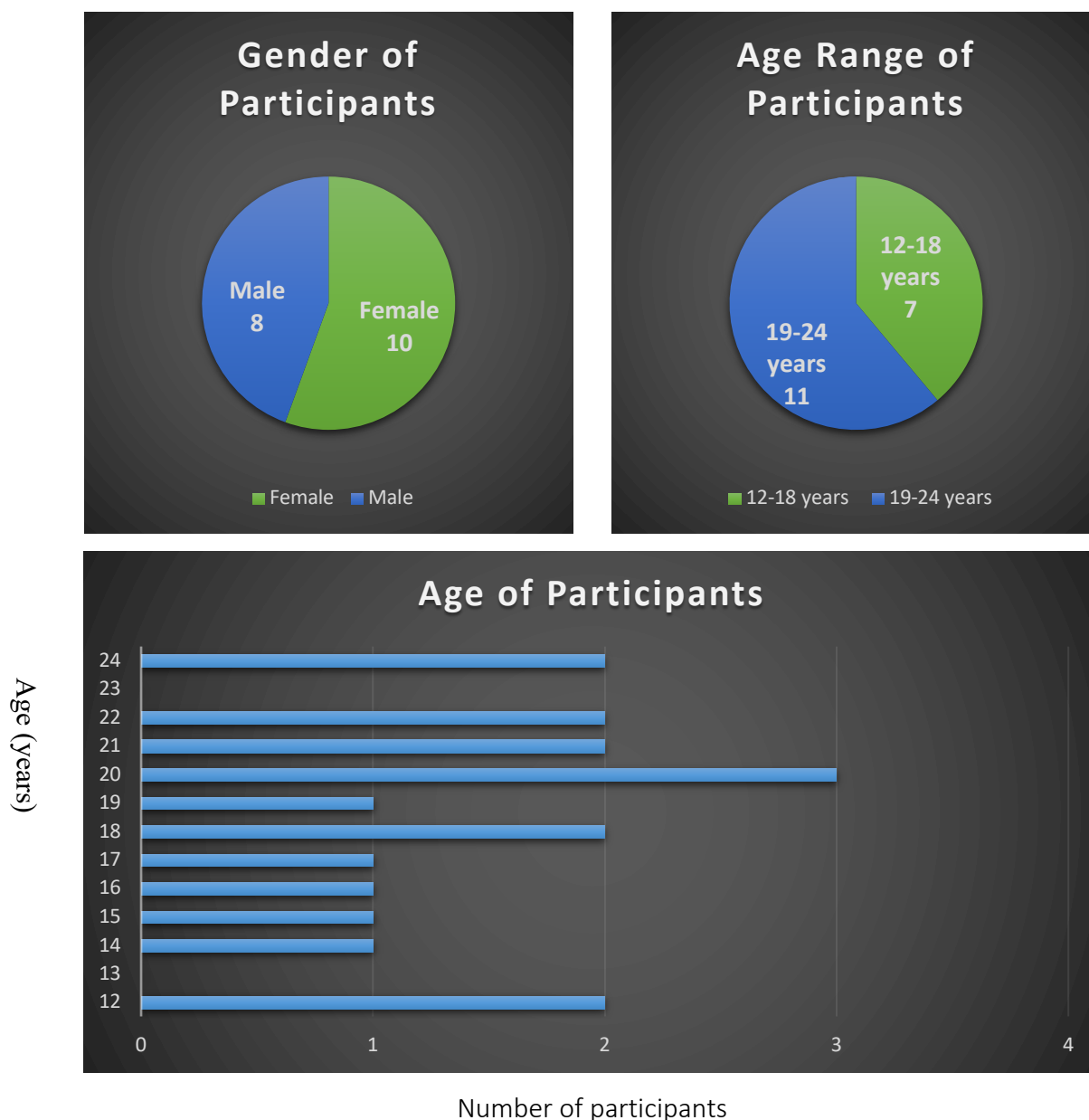
For this research I sought Christchurch young people aged between 12-24, in accordance with the afore-mentioned definition of youth, who could be considered ‘young leaders’ due to their involvement in youth participation groups around Christchurch. It is recognised that young leaders

represent a minority of young people who have chosen to volunteer in their city (Checkoway, 2011), and are particularly passionate about youth voice and youth participation. For this reason, I also sought a small number of participants who had never volunteered and were less involved in the community, as a small opportunity for comparison.

Initially, an email with information sheets was sent to publicly available email addresses of prominent Christchurch youth participation groups, including CYC and PYLAT (see Appendix 2). Young people who were interested in participating in the study then emailed me to volunteer and arrange a time and date for an interview or focus group. From this first pool of participants, snowball sampling was then employed where young people were asked if they had people in their friendship networks who may also be interested in participating. Through this snowballing approach, 18 young people in total participated in the interviews and focus groups, including 14 'young leaders' and 4 who had no volunteer experience and limited interest in local decision-making. The sample size was limited by time constraints and the size of the study in question.

### **3.3.2 Participant Information**

Eighteen young people, aged between 12-24 years old participated in this study on youth perceptions of Christchurch post-disaster and their visions for the future. Of these participants, ten were female and eight were male. Seven of them were, for the purposes of definitions in this study, adolescents, aged between 12-18, and eleven of them were young adults, aged between 19-24. This information is presented in Figure 11 below.



**Figure 11. Gender and age of participants in the study**

Nine participants identified themselves as NZ European, and three participants as Pacifica, with all ethnicities of participants presented in Figure 12 below.

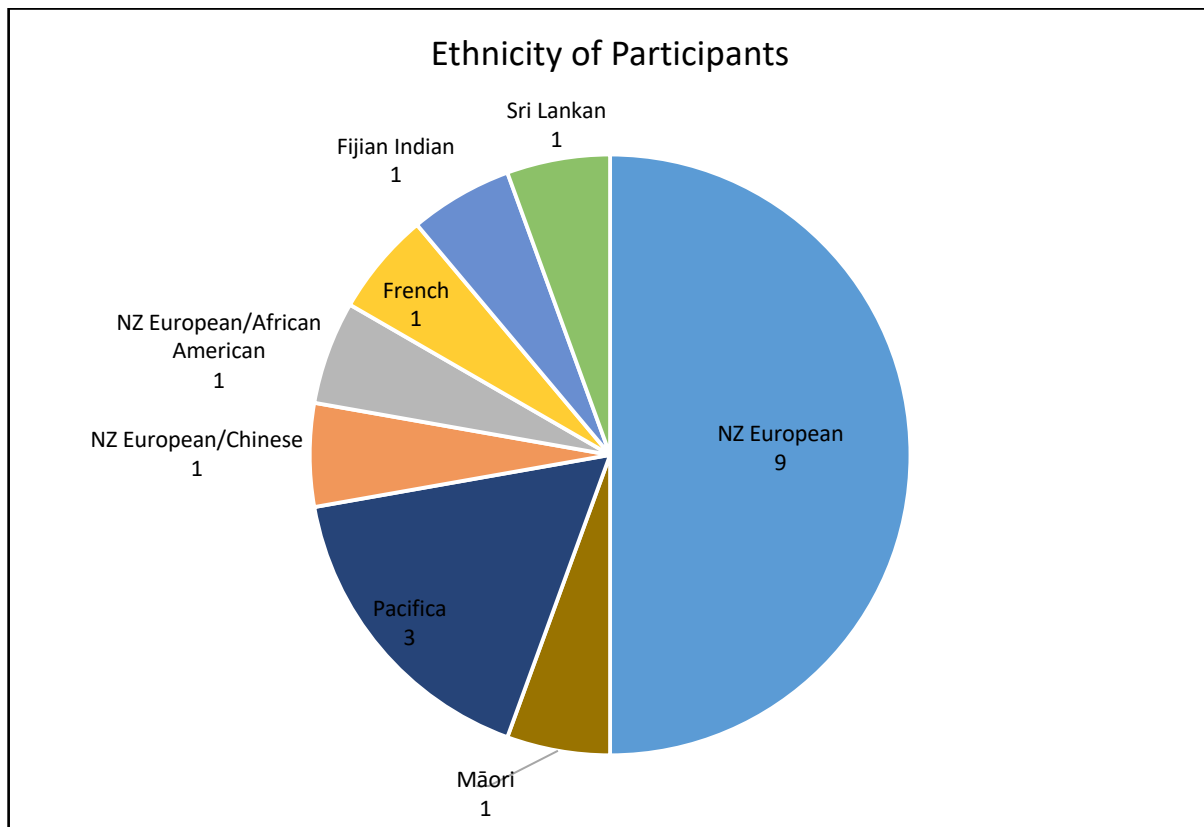
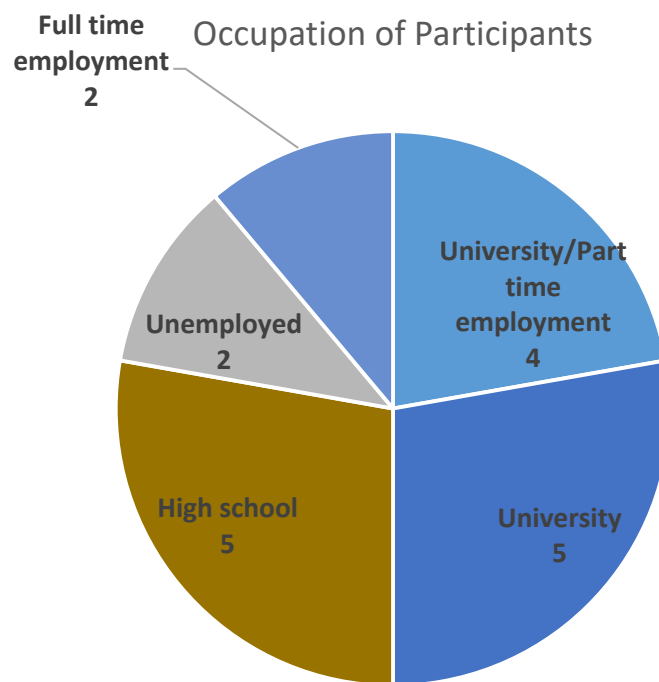


Figure 12. Participants' identified ethnicities

Young people were also asked what their current occupation was, and whether they were volunteering or not. Young people who were currently, or had previously, volunteered as part of a youth participation group or youth council in Christchurch will be viewed as 'young leaders' for the purpose of this study. This information is presented in Figure 13 below:



Voluntary Status of Participants

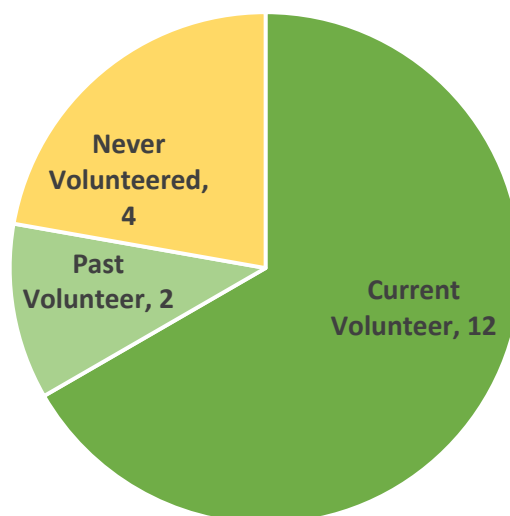


Figure 13. Occupations and voluntary status of participants

As this study focused significantly on young people's perspectives on the city, participants were also asked how long they had lived in Christchurch. This information is displayed in Figure 14 below:

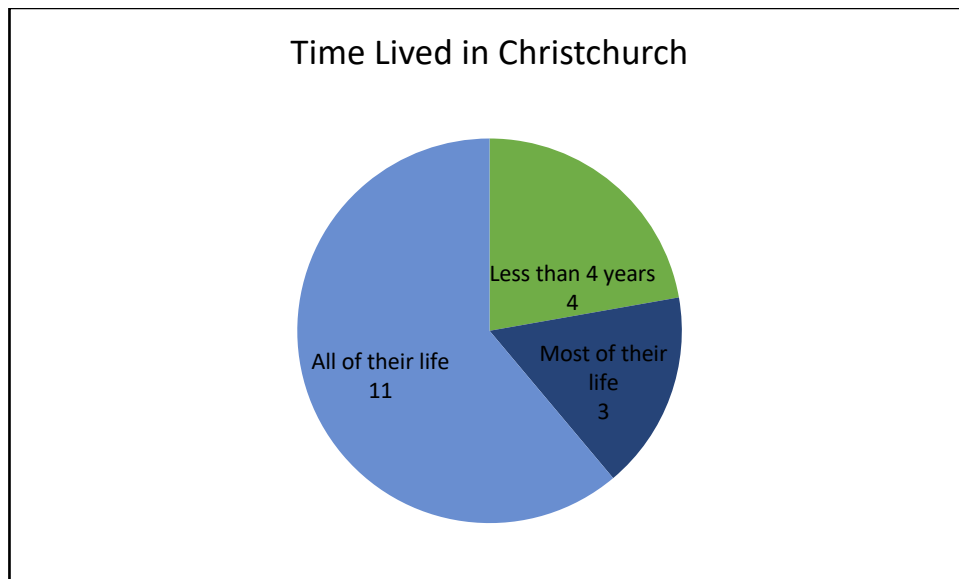


Figure 14. Length of time participants have lived in Christchurch

Finally, participants were asked in the questionnaire if they had voted, or intended to vote in the future in national elections. This was intended to get an idea of the political engagement and intentions of the young people who were studied. All participants responded 'yes'.

### 3.4 Data collection

In line with the qualitative approach detailed at the beginning of this chapter, this study employs a combination of two common qualitative methods of data collection: in-depth interviews and focus groups. This section will outline the rationale for the selection of these methods, as well as the way that participants were sampled, the procedure, and how validity will be achieved.

#### 3.4.1 Interviews

In line with other recent works on young people's political participation (Donald, 2010; Sheerin, 2007; Nissen, 2017) and their perceptions of place in Christchurch (Neville, 2016), in-depth

interviews were used to gather information from young people in the study. Twelve interviews with individuals were conducted over the course of five weeks.

Unlike many quantitative techniques, interviews enable more in-depth data to be gathered by using open questions and receiving more free, detailed answers from participants. This method allows researchers to delve beyond just what is happening, and into the why and the how, by exploring the beliefs, attitudes, aspirations and narratives of interviewees (Pierce, 2008). The advantage of interviews over other data-gathering methods is that they allow participants to speak freely about things that are important to them, and using their own language, rather than being limited by pre-determined answers such as in questionnaires or surveys (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001). Some limitations of interviews when compared to more quantitative methods are that participant's answers are more difficult to compare with the richness and variability of data between interviewees (Pierce, 2008), and that care must be taken to ensure the researcher is aware of 'interviewer bias', or their potential to influence the direction of an interview and participant's responses (Holloway, 1997). Despite these limitations, in-depth interviews remain a powerful method of gathering detailed data and responses (Nissen, 2017; Neville, 2016), and are the preferred method for this thesis as they most suitably address the research questions identified in Chapter One.

Semi-structured interviews were used for this research, whereby a series of questions were followed but the interview was equally able to be led by the respondent, rather than by adhering solely to predetermined questions (Green and Thorogood, 2004). Interviews conducted in this manner have been shown to be particularly successful when examining the perceptions of children and young people (Ergler, 2011). Topics covered in the interviews are listed below, and a full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.



### **Interview Topics**

#### **Section 1: Christchurch**

- Where they spend time
- What they like about Christchurch
- What the issues are that they see in the city
- What their visions are for the city

#### **Section 2: Regeneration**

- How they think the Regeneration is going
- What they like best about it
- What they would change

#### **Section 3: Decision-Making**

- Who makes decisions around here
- Whether decision-makers listen to youth
- How change happens
- How they can make a difference about things that matter to them
- What they would say to a decision-maker who could change things in the city

#### **Section 4: Youth Engagement**

- What they think of the narrative that youth are disengaged
- Thoughts about engaged and disengaged young people
- Visions for youth engagement in Christchurch

### **3.4.2 Focus groups**

Focus groups were used to complement the individual interviews, and to allow young people to speak with others in their friendship circles if that made them feel more comfortable. Punch (2005) defines a focus group as the extension of depth interviewing to involve two or more participants in one session. Like depth interviews, focus groups have become increasingly popular in the social sciences, particularly for research with young people. Focus groups have the benefit of adding an additional layer to the data with the group interactions that occur, producing insights that may be less accessible in one on one interviews (Devere, 1993). Interviewers, however, must be aware of power dynamics occurring between participants in focus groups, and be flexible in their

questioning to ensure that one person does not dominate the discussion (Sheerin, 2007; Donald, 2010).

For political research with young people, smaller focus groups are preferred over larger ones, and focus groups conducted with people in the same friendship networks have been shown to enable participants to feel more comfortable during discussions (Bloor, 2001). Therefore when offering the option between an interview or focus group to participants, I aimed for between 2-5 people in each focus group and invited the interested person to bring along others from their friendship network. Two focus groups were conducted, one with two 12 year old females who were friends, and the other with a friendship group of three males and a female who volunteered together in a Christchurch youth participation group. Focus groups followed the same style as individual interviews, using the above questions, although these were often condensed due to time constraints with a larger group of people.

My research therefore employed two types of qualitative methodology, depth interviews and focus groups, that have been used well in tandem with each other in previous studies on youth participation, youth politics, and youth voice (Sheerin, 2007; Donald, 2010; Peteru, 2006). The following subsection will discuss the procedure that was followed when conducting this research.

### **3.4.3 Procedure**

Interviews and focus groups were between 50-60 minutes in duration. Young people were able to choose the location of the interview in a place that they felt most comfortable, and this varied between libraries and cafes around the city. Young people had previously been sent information sheets and consent forms for themselves, and for their parents if they were still at intermediate or high school.

At the start of the interviews, young people were asked for their verbal assent to participate in the research, and were told they could end the interview or withdraw their results at any time. They were reminded that they could interpret the questions however they wanted to, that no answer was wrong, and that they could ask questions at any time. Participants then provided their

pseudonym, age, gender, ethnicity, time lived in Christchurch, suburb they lived in, voluntary status, and occupation on a brief questionnaire, before the interview or focus group questions began.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Each interview and focus group was transcribed, with transcription treated as an essential part of active immersion with the data and early analysis, as per Riessman (1993). Data analysis was undertaken using thematic analysis to provide an in-depth look at meaning within the transcripts, and dominant themes were identified. Meaning beyond the transcripts was also examined, as is important in thematic analysis, to consider the sociocultural context that participants are situated in and how this may influence their discussions and experiences.

To do this, I read through the transcripts multiple times, annotating them and identifying patterns, similarities and differences between the participants. I created codes from commonalities in the data, and then grouped similar codes into larger themes. From here, I created a visual thematic map and re-examined the data extracts, refining and naming the most dominant themes (Braun and Clark, 2013). I then uploaded transcripts to NVivo and coded them under the main themes I had identified, drawing important quotes from participants into relevant themes to enable ease of retrieval for writing my findings.

In addition to frequent use of quotations from the interviews with young people to guide the reader through Chapters Four, Five and Six, Word Clouds have been used in Chapter Five as a visual guide and summary to participant responses about what they like and dislike about Christchurch. The size of the font indicates the frequency of the themes or words spoken by young people in interviews, with larger font showing topics that were more frequently discussed. As described by Henderson and Segal (2013), word clouds are a useful and accepted method of visualisation in qualitative research, presenting information in a way that is engaging to readers and a useful starting point for further thematic analysis.

### 3.6 Ethics

This study was conducted with the approval of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, granted on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2017 (see Appendix 3). Research with any young person under the age of 18 is considered to be high-risk, and a number of ethical considerations were thus taken into account to ensure the protection of participants. To ensure informed consent, young people, youth participation organisations, and parents (if youth were 16 and under or still at high school), were all provided with information sheets prior to commencing interviews. They were then required to sign consent forms agreeing to participate in the research (including parents if necessary). Participation was completely voluntary and young people were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms, selected by the young people themselves, to keep the identity of participants secret. In addition to informed consent and confidentiality, this research was undertaken with the intention of contributing to the literature on youth voice and participation. Davidson and Tollich (1999) view contribution as a necessary ethical consideration to justify undertaking social research. In this study particularly it is hoped that information gathered from young people will ultimately benefit young people and decision-makers alike in Christchurch, and continue the conversation started by the Christchurch Youth Action Plan about amplifying youth voices in the city and ensuring young people's views and aspirations are considered.

### 3.7 Validity

Validity can be viewed simply as ensuring that research produced is 'good research' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Ensuring the validity of research is crucial, and particularly important to discuss when conducting qualitative research which has less established methods of validation than quantitative research (Maxwell, 2002).

King, Keohane and Verba (1994) in their book on qualitative research have identified three ways in which qualitative validity can be accomplished. They discuss the need for transparency of research procedures; to collect data from a wide range of contexts; and to aim for replicable analysis.

Transparency of research procedures was sought in this study by detailing the way participants were sampled, the ethical considerations followed, and the procedure of interviews and focus groups. Being clear about this information allows readers to draw their own conclusions about whether results that have emerged from the discussions were justified and valid.

The second recommendation for achieving validity in qualitative research was addressed by collecting data from a wide variety of sources, using more than one methodology. This is referred to as 'triangulation' in the literature. I have collected both primary and secondary data in this study, primary data being that from in-depth interviews and focus groups, and secondary data from academic articles and grey literature. Using triangulation 'reduces the risk that conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues' (Maxwell, 2002: 93-94).

Finally, King, Keohane and Verba (1994) recommend that research allows for replicable analysis. Although the nature of qualitative research makes exact data replication impossible, I have used quotes from the interviews with young people throughout my results sections, to present the raw material and allow readers to make their own appraisals of my evaluations.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodology employed for my research, with the objective of understanding young leaders' perceptions of Christchurch post-earthquakes during the city's recovery. I have justified my research approach as a qualitative and interpretivist case study, and described the young people who participated in the study and their demographic information. I have detailed the data collection methods used of depth interviews and focus groups, outlined the research procedure and how I intend to achieve validity of the findings obtained through triangulation. My use of thematic analysis to analyse the data has been described in detail, as well as the ethical considerations that were taken into account when conducting the research. Chapter Four will begin to explore the themes that emerged from the interviews with young people, beginning with their views on decision-making and youth engagement in Christchurch post-disaster.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Youth Perspectives on Decision-Making and Youth Engagement

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*Van: I think, say for young people to make change, it's tougher, cause you're surrounded by people that think they know better than you*

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers how young people in the study view decision-making in Christchurch after the earthquakes, and their perspectives on youth civic engagement more generally. It also seeks to understand the barriers that young people themselves perceive to engaging in city life and decision-making. Their experiences of political inclusion and exclusion will be discussed, drawing upon agency theories outlined in the literature review above. Throughout this chapter, I draw attention to the similarities between young people's responses, as well as the differences, recognising that there are major themes and patterns that can be drawn from their discussions, while simultaneously acknowledging that the youth who participated in this study do not all share the same opinions. Excerpts from the interviews are interwoven throughout the subsections of this chapter to reflect this. I also relate the dominant themes that emerge to previous research on youth attitudes towards decision-making and civic engagement, and to what we know about youth participation during disaster recovery.

This chapter examines four key themes that emerged from the interview and focus group discussions with young people:

- 4.2 Their perspectives on ***decision-making and change***, and their thoughts on who holds power in Christchurch and how well this power is used.

- 4.3 Their perspectives on **youth engagement** in Christchurch, looking at young people's views on the discourse of youth civic engagement and 'disengagement' and their own lived experiences.
- 4.4 The **barriers** that young people see to engaging with local politics, and to being heard.
- 4.5 Their ultimate **vision** of a 'politics for the people' in Christchurch.

The focus groups revealed that most young people want to participate in local politics and decision-making in Christchurch and to feel included, particularly during such an important time in the city's regeneration. However, discussions also revealed the frustrated agency of many young people who reported disappointing experiences as they have attempted to engage in local decision-making. Throughout this chapter, it is also evident that young people involved in the interviews were grappling with a broader question of whether youth inclusion in decision-making post-disaster is more the responsibility of decision-makers or of young people themselves. What emerged from their responses was overall a sense of frustration at being excluded from local politics and decision-making in Christchurch during the regeneration, and requests for local decision-makers to transform their methods of engagement to promote greater participation and inclusion of young people in the city.

## 4.2 Perspectives on Decision-making

Kendall: What would an engaged young person look like to you?

James: Well I think you actually flip the question, and that's what Brad's trying to say, is what would an engaged councillor look like, what does an engaged government look like, what does an engaged decision maker look like?

Young people were asked about their perspectives on decision-making, including who makes decisions, how well they listen to young people, and how they think change happens in Christchurch. In general, their discussions about decision-making in the city were fraught with

frustration. Young people's feelings of exclusion from decision-making are interwoven through this section, and their sense that the process of change is slow and largely outside of their control appears to contribute to their feelings of disempowerment and that they are unable to make a difference.

#### **4.2.1 Decision-makers**

In the interviews, young people were asked to reflect on decision-makers in the city. They were asked questions such as 'Who makes decisions around here?' and 'Do they listen to young people like you?'. Youth responses revealed their perceptions that power is largely concentrated with decision-makers in local and central government, and those with wealth. There was a sense that the wider community was being left out of the regeneration and decision-making processes. A very small number of young people felt listened to by decision-makers, with most youth saying that those in power either 'sort of' listened to them, or that they did not listen.

##### ***4.2.1.1 Who makes decisions around here?***

The above question was not intended to be a test of young people's political knowledge, but rather as part of a discussion of who they perceive has power in the city. Twelve were aware that local government made decisions, and ten also pointed out central government as being influential. It was somewhat surprising that five young people brought up 'the wealthy' as having a lot of power in decision-making in Christchurch, four youth brought up 'the wrong people', three 'weren't sure', and only three mentioned 'the community'.

The discussion that Mrs Norris and Elsie had touched on many of these points:

Kendall: Who makes decisions around here?

Mrs Norris: My mum?



Elsie: Well who can deny! Um. Probably the mayor, and the district gov- I don't actually know how the political system works but I'm pretty sure there's a little district community governments, not mini.. the boards, committees, I dunno.

Kendall: Like the council?

Elsie: The councils! Yes!

Mrs Norris: I'm pretty sure it's the ones who have money too.

Elsie: That's a good point. And I think you know, the actual government up in Wellington, I think they probably make most of the decisions as well. Yeah I don't think, I think maybe it's just mainly the people in power.

There was a difference in levels of confidence in speaking about decision-makers depending on the level of involvement that young people had had with local politics. Ray, as a member of the Christchurch Youth Council was proud to name all of the councillors, whereas Ashley, who had little interest in politics, found it more difficult:

Kendall: Who makes decisions around here?

Ashley: (silence). I don't know. The mayor. I don't even know who the mayor is.

However, despite having more knowledge of who local decision-makers were, engaged young people still expressed frustration that 'the wrong people' are making decisions:

Maria: In terms of who's making decisions... I don't think necessarily the right people are making the right choices. Not because they're the wrong people for the job, but I don't think that they are... equipped with a different perspective if that makes any sense?

(Agreement from focus group)

This fits with a central theme of discussions with young people; their feelings that the community has been left out of decision-making, and that decision-makers are somewhat detached from the people that they are representing in Christchurch. Diana shared that she did not feel that decisions that were made by different bodies always 'fitted together', drawing on a sense of conflict

between decision-makers as well as between decision-makers and citizens. Interestingly, despite being a politics student, David was frustrated at the lack of transparency with the rebuild that made it difficult for him to clearly pinpoint who was making decisions:

Kendall: Who makes decisions around here?

David: In Christchurch? Or like? Um... I don't... like. I mean, the city council obviously. They make decisions. How much of that is the decisions of the city council, how much of that is government? How much of that's decisions by say individual construction companies or the companies that are building things? I don't know, again transparency. So it's difficult to pinpoint. I guess like, the city council is the clearest answer. That's the clearest body that I would say is responsible, at least at the moment for the majority of the rebuild. Which might not even be the case but that's the way that I kinda feel, anyway.

Kendall: That's interesting, even for you as a politics student, it's not transparent enough, it's hard to say who makes decisions. Like it's not an easy question?

David: (Nods) It's not. Yeah.

The lack of transparency and communication about what is happening with the rebuild added to the sense of frustration that David and other young people in the study felt, of the public being so excluded from the decision-making process that they were not even clearly informed about who was making decisions, what they had decided, and why. In general, youth responses to this question began to touch on the power relations they perceived within local decision-making, and certain groups that may hold more power than others, such as those with wealth as compared to the wider community. When answering this question, seven young people expressed their frustration or disappointment with the lack of power they felt the public held in decision-making in Christchurch.

#### ***4.2.1.2 The 'proof is in the pudding'***

After identifying who they perceived as the main decision-makers in the city, young people were asked 'Do they listen to young people like you?'. Eleven young people thought they 'sort of' did, six said no, and one said yes.

Of the eleven youth who felt like decision-makers 'sort of' listened to young people, responses included that: 'only some decision-makers were receptive to youth'; it was particularly 'hard for minority groups to make relationships with decision-makers'; and decision-makers had poor communication and engagement strategies that made it 'hard to tell whether people were listened to or not'.

Crystal spoke of the varying degrees of listening, that she felt were dependent on the individual decision-maker:

Kendall: Do they listen to young people like you?

Crystal: Umm... I think, varying degrees. Because... you can't really say like a whole organisation is listening to young people, umm, because there are some people that, don't focus on what young people are thinking. There are some people within organisations that become aware of the ideas of young people, and get really excited about that and start bringing them in. So yeah, it's varying degrees.

One of the barriers Crystal has identified to decision-makers listening to young people is their lack of interest, focus and prioritisation of young people in their work. Maria spoke of another barrier, the importance of establishing relationships with decision-makers in order to make change, but how this was particularly difficult for minority groups such as young people and Pacifica:

Maria: I mean I gotta be fair I think you just have to establish that relationship with like the main dogs, who do make the choices, but it is hard for like minority groups to kind of have that connection, relationship.

Relationships between young people and decision-makers as a key enabler of meaningful participation have also been recognised in the literature (Gray, 2002; Ministry of Youth Development, 2009; Stringer, 2018). Five young people in the study reported that when they were able to make connections with decision-makers, this made it much more likely that they would be listened to.

However, Diana was one of six young people who felt strongly that decision-makers did not listen to young people, and she spoke out about her frustration that she was not heard in decision-making, even in a tokenistic way:

Kendall: Do they listen to young people like you?

Diana: No, no, no! Young people or young people like me?

Kendall: Young people like you.

Diana: No. And I say that because I'm not even the right kind of young person like me. Like, okay. So basically what I mean by that is the council or whoever is making the decisions will go – (claps hands) we want young people! Alright, um, oh! They're already engaged, we know that through this that and the other, and like they have a past, you know?! They're young, they're a woman! They're LGBT!!! We've got all the groups, we've got all the groups, just like that – covered! Woooooo! (Cheers). Like, I've got everything! I am the perfect storm of what any decision-making body could want! To have that, extra say. But, oh, actually... no, we're not going to include that anyway. Or, you're missing this one thing, so like, you know, we'll just hit you up for the next consultation... or like, you were just too much.

Diana in the above excerpt describes tokenism in the engagement of young people by decision-makers, and how even though she 'ticks all the boxes', she still does not feel included in local politics and able to make change in the city. Oliver was one of six other young people who also discussed decision-makers' lack of listening due to tokenism and stereotyping of youth:

Oliver: Ah. They only listen to the ones that they want to listen to. Ah, there's a lot of tokenism when it comes to youth voice. People are lucky for 40 something year old white men to be listened to, so... "Woopdie doo, we've got a youth"! Now we can tick that off our list type thing.

Tokenism has long been recognised in the literature as a key barrier to young people's participation (Driskell, 2017), and again concerns the power relationships between young people and adults that limit young people to the lower three levels of Hart's Ladder of Participation (1997). Besides tokenism and stereotyping, some of the other reasons for the lack of listening that young people identified included that decision-makers were 'too busy' with other priorities, that they wanted a universal 'youth perspective' that does not exist, and that it was 'difficult for them

to reconcile youth perspectives with their own'. James also pointed out how the power has been largely taken out of the hands of local decision-makers post-earthquakes, and that community engagement has been low on the priority list when rebuilding Christchurch:

James: I think for Christchurch based decision-makers though the hardest thing is it's not often them, at least in the last six years that's had the final say. Yeah. But if they had to move really quickly, cutting youth engagement, cutting community engagement has been the easiest thing to remove. Also because our country doesn't operate out of the best practice of engaging young people.

Here James recognises that local politics after the Christchurch earthquakes has been complex and that disasters often require fast responses and choices, and that even the city council has felt powerless and excluded from decision-making at times (McDonald, 2018c). Finally, the difference between decision-makers listening to voices, and actually acting on those voices was pointed out by three people.

Kendall: So the main decision makers don't listen to voices enough?

Maria: Yeah, don't listen! Cause we do try to open that door for people to have their voices heard. But, in terms of actually taking that in and then actually..

Brad: And then doing something with it!

Maria: Yeah it's a whole different story.

Brad and Maria's discussion was similar to Ray's statement about whether decision-makers listen to young people or not: that 'the proof is in the pudding'. This fits in with Lundy's model of child participation (2013), that 'voice is not enough'; young people need to have an audience and influence in order for their participation to be meaningful and empowering.

Kara was the only person in the study who did feel that decision-makers valued youth voice and actually listened to young people, based on her experience working with the City Council. She felt that the issue was more with young people not wanting to engage with formal decision-making processes:

Kendall: Do they listen to young people like you?

Kara: Oh. I do think they do, um, I actually went to something the other week and they were saying that, it's awesome having young people come in, they actually give a lot of power to that. Um because they don't, they're tired of hearing businesses and old people complaining and they're like, actually well you're gonna be around longer. I'm gonna give more weight to what you're gonna say. Um I think the problem is getting young people to come and talk to them, like I don't think it's the listening, we're kind of getting there? Maybe it does need more work, um but, getting young people in and changing the processes, that's the issue.

Kendall: So if young people were in there they would listen to them, but it's hard to get young people to speak and have a voice?

Kara: Yeah and I'm hearing multiple stories of how when young people have shown up and talked to someone it's actually changed the decision.

This difference between Kara's insider perspective and other young peoples' outsider perspectives on local decision-makers is interesting, and shows how different experiences and relationships can lead to very different perceptions. These differences of opinion start to address a tension that emerged between young people's responses in interviews, over whether the main barriers to youth engagement in the city were with young people or with decision-makers.

The overall feeling of exclusion and frustration at not being heard, or not being heard enough, was clear for most young people, however, and discussions about whether decision-makers listened brought out many anecdotes of exclusion from youth who had tried to engage and felt excluded and disappointed. The following subsection details what youth in the study would like to say to decision-makers if they had the opportunity.

#### **4.2.2 What would you say to them?**

I asked young people what they would say to decision-makers who had the power to change things in Christchurch, and their responses centred around three main themes: wanting decision-makers to focus more on the future; increasing their empathy of local citizens; and clarifying their priorities to enable greater transparency and community-wide understanding.

#### 4.2.2.1 Future-focus

Five young people described wanting decision-makers to focus more on the future and the long-term priorities for the city and its people. Amy and Brad provide two such examples below:

Kendall: If you could speak to someone who could change things in your city, what would you say to them?

Amy: I'd say that... you need to listen to us, and you need to value our opinions. I think it's the culture that needs to change, and you can't change anything if the culture's not gonna change. I think, the fact that they need to listen to us, they need to value the fact that this is going to be our city and we want it to be this way. And of course it's your city at the moment, but they need to future proof everything. Like the city is not the next 10 years, it's bigger than ten years, so you definitely need a plan for like 80, 90, 100 years in the future when we're still living here.

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Brad: And to a really big decision maker, I'd be like, where do you see Christchurch in ten years time? And what do you want it to look like? For Pacific people, for young people, for other ethnic groups, how do you want them to feel? And I'd ask them, how are you gonna make that happen?

This desire for more future-focus shows young people's concern that decision-makers are not adequately planning ahead for the future, with issues such as climate change and growing inequality two such examples of issues that will pose challenging problems for the younger generation to deal with (Christchurch Youth Action Plan, 2017). A request for greater future focus within politics and decision-making was also mirrored in young people's perspectives on place in Chapter 5, and their desire for a more futuristic and forward-thinking city. This too has been reflected in other studies done with young people, both in New Zealand and internationally, concerning their aspirations for politics and their frustration of 'short-termism' in decision-making (Nissen, 2017).

#### 4.2.2.2 Empathy

Four young people in the study discussed the need for decision-makers to have greater empathy for people in the city and what they are going through. Ashley and Brad provided two such examples:

Ashley: I think perspective is a huge thing and I think it's good for people to maybe live in other people's shoes sometimes? And a lot of people haven't really experienced everything that, or they don't experience things as other people do, so maybe I'll just say keep an open mind and look at it from a different point of view?

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Brad: I'd be like, yo you know when you were younger and whoever looked after you, like, they wouldn't listen, how did you feel?

James: Mm!

Maria: That's a really good way of putting it!

Brad: Did they treat you like you didn't matter? Well that's how you make everyone else feel! It's weird eh?

(Laughter)

James: That's some fresh prince of bel air stuff!

Maria: I really like that.

James: That's beautiful.

Maria: Deep.

James: Also that is the realism that gets brought to a decision being made from a young person.

Maria: Cause I think his way you can actually picture it in your head!

James: And it impacts how you feel. You don't feel like you belong, if you're...



This desire for greater empathy from decision-makers and for them to ‘live in other people’s shoes’ and remember how it felt when they were younger to not be listened to or respected, further demonstrates the salience of inclusion within local politics and city life for the young people in this study. James related not being listened to by decision-makers to young people feeling that they do not belong, something that is also referenced in the literature (Frostholm, Gravesen & Mikkelsen, 2018). The importance of belonging for young people has recently been argued for, as something essential for youth to connect to people and places, and to feel part of something bigger than themselves (Hopkins, 2013). Belonging as a theme will be elaborated on further in the discussion section of this chapter, and in the following chapters on youth perspectives on the physical and social aspects of Christchurch.

#### ***4.2.2.3 Transparency***

Finally, four young people wanted decision-makers to explain their priorities for rebuilding Christchurch, as a lack of transparency meant they struggled to even understand what was happening, and by whom. David expressed this below:

Kendall: What would you say to them?

David: Um..... I would ask them what their priorities were? I think that’s important to know? Cause I’m not even sure. I mean like, you get an idea and you get a feel, like, if they could answer honestly, what are your real priorities for the city? Building these, I was gonna say vanity projects, they’re not quite vanity projects. Building the big sports complex, right? Is that your priority because it’s a vanity project, is it because you genuinely believe it’s gonna drive people into the city? I dunno.

This desire to simply be communicated with about what is going on in local politics in the recovery period, was also listed as one of the key goals decision-makers had for the Christchurch recovery (New Zealand Government, 2011). Being informed is one of the lower levels of participation identified in the literature (Hart, 1997) and it is interesting that even young people who are active in youth participation groups in the city and interested in the regeneration do not feel informed and are struggling to understand what is happening. This reinforces the ‘long way to go’ that young people in the study felt decision-makers had before they were genuinely receptive and inclusive of

the people of Christchurch and transparent about the choices they were making in the regeneration. The next subsection examines young people's perspectives on change in the city.

#### 4.2.3 Change

Youth were asked how they think change happens in Christchurch, and what kind of change they see happening around them. Of all questions asked in the interviews, this was met with the most frustration by young people, who either said they did not see change happening around them, or they could only see minor change, or change that they could not influence in any way. This is particularly interesting in the context of the regeneration, when Christchurch is in a significant transition period of change. Ten youth expressed frustration about how change happens, and eight said they thought that change was mostly in decision-makers' control, and outside of the community's influence.

Fluffy talked about how she did not see change happening, and her belief that any changes that were happening were controlled by people in power:

Kendall: How do you think change happens around here?

Fluffy: Um.... I don't know.

Kendall: What sort of change happens? Do you see change happening?

Fluffy: Honestly no. No. I still think it's mostly... like, the Council or whatever Ministry's making the decision at the time. They do whatever they want to do rather than voices being heard and decisions being made, by like, Christchurch people.

Kendall: They make the decisions but you don't feel like the people are part of the change process?

Fluffy: Yeah. I could be wrong but I feel like... no.

Stevie shared this sentiment with Fluffy that the community struggle to participate in change making in the city:

Stevie: Umm... I don't know. Someone has an idea then they put in a proposal with a group of other people, and the government and council say yes or no, they're gonna support it. Or they're gonna put money into it. And most of the time they'll say no.

This sense of frustrated agency expressed by both Fluffy and Stevie was also reported in Hayward's (2012) research with Christchurch children. Four young people in this study put their frustration about how change happens in Christchurch down to the lack of transparency from decision-makers in Christchurch post-disaster, with David saying 'Again, I don't really know what is happening so it's hard to say how change happens around here'.

While this sense of powerlessness and exclusion from decision-making was reflected in each question asked in the interviews about local politics, young people were most obviously frustrated with this question on change. Young people found it easiest to point out physical changes, with six young people mentioning changes to the built environment during the regeneration, three youth mentioning political changes, and one young person mentioning social change. This question in particular seemed to irk young people the most due to their own strong desires to make change in their communities, reflected in their membership of youth participation groups and their roles as 'champions of youth voice' in Christchurch. To discuss change in the city and express their thoughts about the slowness of change, as well as the lack of community involvement, appeared to only amplify their frustration about decision-making in Christchurch.

Charlie also felt that not much real, genuine change was happening in Christchurch, and deliberated over possible reasons for this. He mentioned the lack of vision he perceives decision-makers have for their city, a level of comfort or apathy that he believes many Christchurch people also share. He also talked about the lack of concern that people seem to have for the problems of others, due to being 'largely caught up in their own lives'. This unease around the lack of empathy that people have for those who are struggling was also described in the above subsection on what youth wanted to say to decision-makers, and is discussed again in the following section on barriers to youth engagement. This reflects the sense of social responsibility and social justice that many youth in this study felt.

Overall, young people's discussions around change in Christchurch being slow, difficult, minor, largely aesthetic, and excluding the community further shone light on their sense of disempowerment, exclusion and frustrated agency when considering decision-making in Christchurch post-disaster. The next subsection will examine young peoples' perspectives on youth engagement.

## 4.3 Perspectives on Youth Engagement

In the interviews and focus groups, I sought the perspectives of young people on youth civic engagement in Christchurch, including their responses to the discourse that young people are "apathetic and do not care about decision-making". In discussions about engagement, young people talked about the value of youth voice from their own perspectives, their sense of social responsibility that drives their participation, and the difficulties of achieving meaningful change despite considering themselves to be 'engaged youth'. They also shared their perspectives on young people who are less engaged in decision-making than they are, and the main barriers they saw to youth engaging in local politics during the Christchurch regeneration. Overall, young people spoke passionately about the importance of youth voice and participation in local decision-making, and the struggle that they experience in trying to amplify the voices of other young people in the city and make a difference about issues that matter to them.

### 4.3.1 Discourse

The perception of young people as 'apathetic' and disengaged has become increasingly common within the media (Holman, 2013; The Economist, 2017), and decision-makers, experts and researchers appear to be asked for their perspectives and advice more on how to best engage youth more often than young people themselves (Curran, 2011; Peteru, 2006). In the interviews, I asked young people to respond to this discourse by asking what they would say to people who thought that youth were 'disengaged and didn't care about decision-making in Christchurch'.

This question received some very passionate responses. Nine young people strongly disagreed with this statement, and their responses largely turned the responsibility for perceived youth apathy

back onto decision-makers and adults. These responses included: that young people lack the opportunities to participate in decision-making and are not encouraged to do so; that adults simply do not value youth opinions; that adults do not have a 'real sense' of young people; and that consultation methods used by decision-makers need to change. Excerpts from these discussions are shown below:

Kendall: What do you think when people say: 'Young people are disengaged and don't care about decision-making'?

Crystal: Um... I internally laugh a little bit! Most of the time it is normally.. what they're told, in like popular culture. They're normally told that, young people just care about what the Kardashians are doing more than what their city's doing.

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Brad: I'd be like, shit that's a small minded attitude to have! (Laughter) Maybe they're just so scared that they can't make a difference because their voices aren't actually being heard. When they are being heard, what do you do about it? They don't see the change, they don't see the immediate effects. So of course they're gonna have a certain negative statement about it. How they don't care about the city and whatnot. But they care. They just don't know what to do, cause they're 12, 14 or whatever.

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Amy: It's just the whole culture of "you don't want to be heard" - people don't want to hear you! So you're not gonna speak.

These above responses show young people's strong disagreement with the idea that youth are apathetic. Similar to the findings of Nissen (2017) in her study on youth political agency, the youth above believe that young people do care about their city and what is happening around them, despite being stereotyped otherwise. In the excerpts above, youth put the responsibility squarely back on decision-makers and adults for creating a perception of youth that in itself excludes young people from participating in local politics and urban planning.

This sentiment that young people do care about issues was also shared by three other youth who were interviewed, who disagreed with the statement that youth are apathetic about their city and decision-making but could also see where this perspective had come from. They pointed more to the barriers to youth engagement as a reason that young people are, or appear to be, apathetic:

Kendall: What do you think when people say: 'Young people are disengaged and don't care about decision-making'?

David: Certain aspects are true, I think. But you have to look at, take a step back and look at the barriers. Why are they apathetic? Because it actually matters to them more. They're apathetic because they don't realise the change that they could make. But.. that stems from the institutions around them and how they're set up, and how they're never actually empowered to get out and change things anyway.

David again turned the focus of young people's disengagement back onto decision-makers and political institutions that are not designed to empower young people to engage. Van similarly agreed that young people's 'apathy' is really a sense of disillusionment with the way that politics is done:

Van: And the whole apathetic, the perspective of youth being apathetic. I think, not just in Christchurch, but on like a more global scale, like our generations are becoming disillusioned with the way things are. And I suppose that's where the whole perspective on the, "oh they're apathetic", comes from.

Kendall: So it comes from a sense of disillusionment. Can you tell me more about that feeling?

Van: I think... the disillusionment comes from, maybe, a realisation that like, you're part of this, process that's um, I don't wanna sound repetitive.. um, it's like. It's the same fucking thing over and over again. Sure you vote for this person, you get this, you vote for this person, you get this. Maybe if you vote for this person things improve.. um. But does it really? Does it? Is that enough? Is that a short term, bandaid on your arm as opposed to like, this is gonna sound bad, but like... curing the infection.

Kendall: That there's deeper problems in society that are band-aided over but not really addressed?

Van: Yeah... yeah.

This notion that young people's disillusionment with politics and the lack of change that occurs is partially behind youth's perceived 'apathy', again touches on the frustration that some young people feel with political systems and institutions (Nissen, 2017). In the above conversations, young people either believe that decision-makers, adults and political institutions exclude young people, or that young people choose to exclude themselves due to their disappointment with political systems. This sense of exclusion and the frustrated agency that emerges from this has also

been noted in previous research with young people in New Zealand and Christchurch respectively (Nissen, 2017; Hayward, 2012) and becomes a prominent theme throughout this chapter on youth's perspectives on engagement and decision-making.

### 4.3.2 Engagement

Despite young people's frustration in this study about their exclusion from politics, fourteen young people interviewed were part of youth participation groups and highly involved in local decision-making, either previously or currently. Many of them appeared to be used to fighting for a sense of inclusion in local politics and city life to represent themselves and the voices of other Christchurch young people. I was interested in their perspectives about why they engage personally, and what they find particularly challenging about their role as young leaders in Christchurch. Discussions about why they engaged centred around a sense of social responsibility they felt about making a difference in their communities, and the importance they placed on youth voices being part of political conversations. However, stigma from their peers at being engaged in local politics was a particular challenge for some young people in the study.

#### 4.3.2.1 *If not me, then who?*

Young people were given the opportunity to speak about their own stories of why and how they came to be more engaged in local politics, youth voice and decision-making. The most common response, reported by five young people, considered their feelings of a sense of social responsibility to make a difference in their community. Three young people talked about the need to take action on issues that mattered to them, including Amy:

Amy: I think just recently, little things [have] prompted me to be like – actually there are these huge issues in society that are not being heard. And like, there's huge things that are happening, and someone needs to speak. And if it's not me, then who?

Diana came from a difficult background and was met with many obstacles in trying to improve her life, both for herself and for those around her, but still shared this sense of social responsibility with Amy:

Diana: I'm lucky that I met the right people at the right times. And I wouldn't be where I am without a lot of um, coincidental connection. My grandparents like to remind me that I could be... ah... (laughs) sitting on the side of the road on Fitzgerald Ave still... um. Yeah. But I'm not. And I did that. So I'm engaged because I have to be and I have to keep going. And if I don't keep going, um, bad things will happen to people who are just like me. So I'm engaged because it's a long freaking story and um, poverty, pressures, racism sucks!

Kendall: You're engaged because you care, it means something to you personally, and you have a sense of social responsibility for everyone else.

Diana: Yes, I do. Social responsibility is my life.

Elsie and Mrs Norris had a sweet conversation about the way that Mrs Norris looked up to Elsie for her engagement efforts, despite the pushback she received from other peers:

Kendall: Why do you engage as much as you do? Were you always like that?

Elsie: Not really. But I just think if someone doesn't do it then who is gonna do it? Who's gonna change everything?

Mrs Norris: Because she is a pretty intelligent person. You could be PM.

Elsie: Thank you.

Mrs Norris: Not at your age I mean in 10 or 20 years.

Elsie: I picked that up.

Kendall: So you actually wanna change things and you feel like you can do it?

Elsie: Yup, for the better. Not Donald Trump change.

Mrs Norris: Actually, Elsie, I'm actually older than her, but I'm still looking more like (up at her from below)

Kendall: You feel like you're down there and she's up there?



Mrs Norris: Yeah, cause she's actually younger than me but she has so much courage sometimes.

What united these responses was a sense of social responsibility that young people shared, and a desire to make changes in their city and communities for the better. Most of the above youth had pondered the question that if they did not try to make a difference in society, who would? This sense of responsibility to make a positive difference appeared to be the main driving force behind young leader's attempts to participate in local decision-making.

#### ***4.3.2.2 Importance of Youth Voice***

Kendall: So [adults] have written young people off, unfairly?

Stevie: Yes. I think everyone has an opinion and a right to an opinion, and.. yeah. Young people's opinions are important as well.

Five young people interviewed took care to stress why the voices of young people are important in politics, as mentioned by Stevie above. This was the other most common reason that young leaders reported they wanted to participate in decision-making in Christchurch. In terms of the salience of youth voice, they talked about five key words: future, honesty, skills, rights and insight.

Kara commented that young people would gain valuable skills through being an active citizen:

Kendall: And why do you think it's important for young people to have a say in the city?

Kara: Well first of all we're gonna be round the longest. So like that's really important. But also that whole idea of being an active citizen, and I think it's so important for people to understand what's going on in the world around them, and how they can have an impact. Um, and there's lots of things that it shows if you're engaged it strengthens your confidence and you gain all these other skills that I think are real important.

The youth participation focus group answered by talking about youth rights, young people's unique insights, and the way this can help to create a better future:

Kendall: How would you answer the question, why do the voices of young people matter?

(Laughter)

James: Well the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child says that young people's voices are important for future proofing decision making. Often young people look at situations in a way that is fresh and um... yeah I guess it's the new innovative solutions. If we continue to have older decision makers not partnered and mentoring younger ones and young ones mentoring older ones, we're just gonna miss a whole breadth of what we could do.

Maria: I think the key word there is just future. You know, like, we're not gonna get anywhere if it's just old people that are making all the choices. But if you start introducing young people, you know that bridge starts to get closer and closer and eventually it will start to be a bridge and people can easily cross over.

While they expressed that local decision-makers were not focused enough on the future in the above subsection, the focus group here described the importance of young people being part of decision-making in order to drive this future-focus. The awareness that these young people had of the salience of youth voice and youth engagement in politics, and the impact that this lack of participation could have on the future, only added to the frustrated agency they experienced when they felt excluded from local decision-making. However, despite their sense of social responsibility and dedication to amplifying the voices of other young people in the city that appears to drive their participation, young people interviewed also recognised that it is not always easy to engage in politics, as is discussed in the next subsection on stigma.

#### **4.3.2.3 *'Backs against the wall'***

Kendall: You mentioned the perception of you as an engaged youth can sometimes be negative?

Amy: Definitely. I think people see the fact of like "Why are they doing this? It's so pointless. No one's gonna listen to you! I think you're just doing it for like the show".

Young people recognised that they were excluded from politics by the media, by decision-makers, and by adults, and two young people described feeling that youth had their 'backs against the wall' when trying to participate in local decision-making. The use of this phrase implies that political engagement is inherently challenging for young people, with limited options compared to adults.

Five youth also talked about the ways in which they were excluded by other young people for being engaged with local decision-making. As described in the above excerpt by Amy, these young people talked about the stigma and negative stereotypes put on them by their own cohort, and how this was particularly challenging for them:

Kendall: You said before about the kind of 'uncoolness' of being engaged as a young person. Can you expand on that?

Oliver: I think when Christchurch youth think of youth voice they think of people that... maybe ah, have more money, are white... people that already have family connections or it's just pushed onto them as a child that they're going to be involved in politics and stuff like that. Ah. It's almost seen as uncool because, ah, it's just not what everyone else is doing as well, which is stupid to say, but it really does make a difference. Ah, and I'm not sure how we're going to change that. Umm, not much else to it other than it being, to it being uncool, I'd say, hmm, maybe.... maybe we're just not as visible or maybe the things that we do aren't seen as that... or they don't align with what is you know currently seen as cool.

Here Oliver spoke about the stereotypes of class and ethnicity placed on young people who engage with politics in Christchurch by other young people, as well as a stigma of being 'uncool' because they are not conforming to social norms and doing what everyone else their age is doing. Ray also described this sense of stigmatisation from his peers, and talked about the effect that this negative perception had on him at school:

Kendall: How do people at school perceive you as an engaged young person?

Ray: I get perceived as an over-achiever. Who's also a teacher's pet. And someone who is just there for like... yeah. Cause I get told that I, um pretend to be who I am around teachers. Which I don't. And that teachers only like me because I.. because of that. I don't, I don't understand it...

Kendall: Is that hard for you to be perceived in that way?

Ray: (Nods) When it comes to the kids at school, yes.

For Ray, it appeared to be even more painful to be excluded by his peers than by adults or decision-makers. Despite this, stigmatisation appeared to be a challenge rather than a barrier for many of the young leaders involved in the study, and having their 'backs against the wall' did not

stop any of the five young people who spoke about stigma from continuing to engage and participate in local politics. The next subsection examines the barriers that young people reported to engaging with decision-making in greater depth, along with the barriers that they perceived for decision-makers engaging with young people.

## **4.4 Barriers to Youth Participation**

Young people interviewed discussed the barriers that prevented them and other young people they knew from engaging, or engaging effectively, in local politics in Christchurch. As well as this, they discussed the barriers that they saw impeded decision-makers from engaging well with youth in the city and encouraging their participation. These barriers are described in the subsections below and, in keeping with the broader narrative of political exclusion youth described in the interviews, can be viewed as the way youth in the study explained their own and other young people's exclusion from decision-making in the city.

### **4.4.1 Barriers for Young People**

When describing the barriers that they saw that prevented young people from participating in local politics post-disaster, seven main themes emerged. These included fear, lack of interest, lack of knowledge or perceived expertise, a lack of spaces to come together, not having the right connections, having more pressing priorities or challenges in life, and decision-makers themselves not reaching out effectively to young people. These will be described in the subsections below, with example excerpts from the interviews and focus groups.

#### ***4.4.1.1 Fear***

Five young people talked about how fear prevented them from engaging more in politics, including intimidation by other groups of people, a fear of failure, and fear of sacrificing their own comfort. Kara explained her negative experiences of other interest groups scaring young people away from participating:

Kara: What we're constantly getting is like old white people who like complain and then get their lawyer onto it or whatever, cause they're really angry about their funeral home in Fendalton, you know that's a great example. And it's just like, well you are so used to getting what you want that you demand it and you will threaten legal action if you don't. Um, and it's like that's not what democracy looks like? Like you will scare other people off.

Kendall: So some people are scaring others off from talking?

Kara: Yeah. I actually remember last year like some of the CYC people went to the annual plan, one of the workshops, the roundtables, and they were too scared to talk because there were a bunch of old people there screaming about rates.

Stevie also talked about feeling intimidated by local politics, as well as a fear of failure, being reasons she does not engage much with decision-making.

Stevie: Um, I don't know, I guess it's intimidating. The people that you might meet along the way. Or like failure. Being like, ah that's not gonna work anyway.

Van added to this concept of fear being a barrier to engagement by discussing people's 'fear of sacrifice' that may prevent them from trying to make social and political change, with it being easier and 'more comfortable' for people to disengage politically. These fears that young people had of sacrificing comfort, and of failing, have also been reflected in the wider literature on barriers to youth participation (Watts and Flanagan, 2007).

#### **4.4.1.2 Interest**

Another theme that was discussed by seven young people was about a lack of interest or passion for politics being behind youth disengagement from decision-making in Christchurch. When youth who participated in the study were asked their perspectives on young people that are not interested in engaging with local decision-making in Christchurch, six youth recognised that there are some people for whom politics 'just isn't their cup of tea', and they were understanding of this, saying that 'it's not for everyone'. Stevie commented on this lack of interest that she herself feels:

Kendall: How could you and other young people make a difference about the issues that matter to you?

Stevie: I don't know.

Kendall: Can you? Do you feel like you could?

Stevie: Um... I feel like it would take so much effort that I wouldn't bother. To be honest. Like the thought of, like... I don't even know what I have strong opinions about anyway, so I don't know what I want to change. I probably wouldn't even try.

Kendall: So first you need to have strong opinions?

Stevie: Yeah, be passionate about something, and then know the right people and have the connections to start trying to make the change.

For Stevie, this lack of passion for politics was one of the main barriers for her to engaging in local decision-making, and she did not see anything that she particularly wanted to change in the city, or felt that she could.

#### **4.4.1.3 Knowledge**

Five young people also talked about their perception that they weren't knowledgeable enough to feel confident to participate in decision-making as a barrier for them. Both Van and Amy discussed this:

Kendall: How could you and other young people make a difference about the issues that matter to you?

Van: Mm.... (silence). I think it's.... I think there's this like.. this perception that only those who have had adequate experience in life, be it professional experience, professional what have you.. can only effect change. And I don't really.. I do agree with the reality of it, but I don't agree with.. it's viability. I think, say for young people to make change, it's tougher, cause you're surrounded by people that think they know better than you.

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Amy: I think they'd also feel that they couldn't say something that maybe isn't as academic as they would be expecting on the board. So... a people or person my age is asked to do the survey they'd probably go back and double-think, second-guess everything they say.

This feeling of inadequacy is described in the literature as a common barrier experienced by young people when engaging in politics (Wong, Zimmerman & Parker, 2010). Amy responded to this perception poignantly:

Amy: For the most part [decision-makers] are like, “Young people – they’re imaginative, they don’t actually know about the real world”. But it’s actually like, we live in this world too, we know what we want!

This idea that youth are experts in their own lives is an emerging theme in the literature on young people and policy (Vromen and Collen, 2010) and has also been recognised in the literature on youth participation post-disaster (Bartlett, 2008).

#### **4.4.1.4 Spaces**

Three young people discussed the lack of physical spaces to come together as a reason that youth engagement in politics is difficult. Charlie talked about this in his interview:

Kendall: What barriers are there to [change] happening?

Charlie: Ah, I suppose, one of the barriers is just distance and networking. Cause you may have the same opinion but you don’t know the person or people that agree with you on things. Like there’s no way to rally people together except in like a political way, and I think a barrier of coming together is just, um, yeah not knowing how, I suppose.

David shared a similar viewpoint about the difficulties of bringing young people together into one space:

David: You run into issues like collective youth voice. Classic issue. Try getting 500 young people together, you know? To protest an issue. Like it’s way easier when you’re community wide, because you’re like right we’re gonna meet in the local church and do it. It’s easy for a community because you’ve got one space. If you’ve got youth, what we first tried to do was online, because that’s a platform that all youth use. But online doesn’t make news headlines. You know? You don’t get to the front page of the press with a facebook group that is, like, look how many people are in this facebook group that are challenging this action! Like, no one

cares. You need a picture, you need pickets, you need all the traditional things that make news and actually affect change in that way.

Here David recognised the importance of physical spaces as necessary for bringing people together collectively, and face-to-face being a more effective platform than online when trying to make change in that it captures the attention of media, decision-makers and the community and is therefore more likely to influence decisions. The prominence of young people engaging and communicating online in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been recognised as having both benefits and drawbacks in the literature on youth civic engagement (Bennett, 2008). Young people's perspectives on this will be discussed further in section 4.4.3.2 on 'Engagement methods'.

#### **4.4.1.5 Connections**

Another barrier brought up by five young people was the importance of connections when wanting to make change. Maria here talked about her own personal experience of not realising that she could have a say until she joined a youth participation group in Christchurch:

Maria: I think it's hard if you don't have the support. Um, I think just, I don't know. I didn't even realise that us young people could have a voice until I joined PYLAT. Are we allowed to say that? Like... I dunno I wasn't just aware, like hey you young people can talk about stuff, you can have your voices heard and you can.. your opinion does matter. I just never realised it, until I joined PYLAT and just saw the work that we did. But I think it's hard if you don't know, or if you haven't been given that, resource to kinda be like, hey you can do this, do that.

Maria described how connecting together as a group of young people in Christchurch helped her to recognise that young peoples' opinions were important and could contribute to local decision-making, and how other youth may not realise they can make a difference without connections such as these. The importance of building relationships with decision-makers was also discussed as necessary in order to make meaningful change, yet was something that three young people described as being difficult from their own experiences in youth participation groups in the city.



#### 4.4.1.6 Priorities

Six young people discussed youth having other priorities that were more pressing as a barrier to them engaging in local politics:

David: Like it's difficult because... especially, I mean anyone, at any point in their lives, it's hard to look past the next year, or the next twelve months right? And realistically for a lot of young people, what happens... even though we're gonna be the ones in charge in twenty years time, there's a lot to think about. You know? Even though we're thinking about, what are we doing next year, high school? Uni? Job? Get into the workforce? Like, there are more pressing priorities. And that's why my engagement wasn't at the same level to what it was at, say, end of high school. I've got other priorities, and I feel like, that's why... if that was their top priority, they'd care a lot about it. But they just have other more short term things. Me as well.

Ashley similarly spoke from her own experience about not engaging in politics because of other things she has prioritised:

Ashley: Ah... how do I say this without sounding like a terrible person? You sort of get so caught up in your own life that you don't always pay attention to what is going on around you and time passes so quickly that you don't really notice changes sometimes until it sort of hits you in the face.

This discussion with Ashley lead to her expressing guilt for her lack of engagement due to having other priorities. As the interview progressed, she started to think more about the importance of participation in politics and society, the significance of it given the history of women's suffrage, and the disappointment that her grandmother would feel with her lack of interest and other priorities:

Kendall: It's interesting that talking about this you feel kind of bad, or guilty?

Ashley: I do! I do. I feel like oh my gosh, I should really brush up on, even just to know a little bit would be good. But really, I just have no interest in it. I just never think to look into it. Unless it's right in your face. Like obviously the elections is everywhere. You just have to look into it, and make a decision, and vote, my grandma would shoot me if I didn't vote. "Women chained themselves to the fence", she would say, "so that you have the right to vote!" So obviously, you know, I should really have a bit more pride in it. Um and in like, a little bit more concern maybe for the generation to follow us. And how... who we vote for now and what happens now in our community is gonna affect them later. Actually, it's quite, it's really bad. I feel really bad. For every woman that came before me. Cause they fought so so so hard to be a part of it. And I suppose

cause we never went through that we can't really appreciate the rights that we have, and the information that we can get, and the knowledge that we can get. Wow. Woo! I'm so sorry.

This conversation about the barriers to participation appeared to encourage Ashley's self-reflection about her own life and she seemed to recognise that community engagement with politics was more important than she had thought, both because of how hard previous generations had fought for the right to participate, and for the challenges that are facing the generations to come.

#### **4.4.1.7 Decision-Makers**

Finally, rather than being reasons that are intrinsic to young people themselves, four young people talked about a key barrier to youth participation being the way that young people are engaged with by decision-makers or adults concerning politics:

Kendall: What do you think about those young people who don't want to engage with decision-making in Christchurch?

Amy: I don't think they um, don't necessarily want to, I think it's the fact that they've been encouraged not to want to.

Diana had a really interesting discussion where her viewpoint on young people's disengagement evolved from being related to their own lives and background, to being the responsibility of decision-makers to reach out to them:

Kendall: What do you think about those young people who don't want to engage with decision-making in Christchurch?

Diana: I know them... um, I definitely know her! Um, I think that they don't realise, um... (sighs). No, no okay. I think that decision makers just haven't reached out to them in the right way. Or I think they haven't realised or haven't been taught.. um, or haven't looked up, that something they're really interested in is controlled by decision makers. Is controlled by the government.

Kendall: So they haven't been reached out to in the right way, they've got other stuff that they care about more maybe?

Diana: Yeah. And they don't realise that that stuff that they care about more... maybe it's a bad situation that they care about more. Maybe they've got a lot of trouble going on with their house, talking about their physical house. Maybe it's broken, and terrible, and that stuff. You know, state housing, or maybe they can't afford food, or maybe they're just actually having a really bad time mentally. (pause). Affected by the government. And, you know, affected by local government as well.

Kendall: And they don't always realise that?

Diana: Yeah. Yeah. Because they haven't been taught to realise that, or told that. The thing is, they shouldn't have to realise it, they should be told! Hey, you have depression, we can help with that, because it's called mental health services. Those kinds of things, you know?

Kendall: Yeah, so it's not on them, it's on decision makers to reach out to them?

Diana: (Nods). It shouldn't be on them. Yeah. If you're a public servant, you're a public servant. Servant to the public. Servant! Someone who literally serves to do what the people need. If you're not doing what the people need, change what you're doing!

This emphasis by Diana on it being the responsibility of decision-makers to encourage youth participation in local politics has been a dominant theme of this subsection, transforming the narrative and discourse of participation being young peoples' responsibility to improve upon, to that of adults' and decision-makers' responsibility. Oliver comments on the need for both young people and adults to connect and work together in decision-making:

Kendall: Whose responsibility is it for young people to engage in decision-making?

Oliver: I think it's everyone's. It's a two way street in that youth have to speak in order for their voice to be heard in the first place, but then someone's got to listen to them too, and it's no use for that person to be another youth.

The focus group discussions revealed many situations where youth reported attempting to be included in local politics but still feeling excluded, and Oliver describes above the need for both young people and decision-makers to connect and be actively engaged with each other for youth participation to be meaningful. The next subsection addresses this in further detail by examining

the barriers that youth perceived impeded decision-makers effective engagement with young people in the city.

#### **4.4.3 Barriers for Decision-Makers**

During the interviews, many conversations turned from the barriers to youth-engagement with decision-makers in Christchurch, to the barriers to decision-maker's engagement with youth. Three main themes emerged here: the interactions between adults and young people; the methods of engagement and consultation used by decision-makers; and the formal processes used in local government being outdated.

##### ***4.4.3.1 Adult-youth interactions***

David: If you're a young person, and you know everything, you know, if you know all the things, you literally knew everything better than everyone... Your opinion is still worth less than a hundred people who know nothing.

Seven young people in the interviews said that the major barrier they saw to youth engagement in politics was the way that adults interacted with young people. In particular they talked about being treated as 'less than' by decision-makers, not being taken seriously, engagement not being genuine, decision-makers preferring to listen to experts, and an overall lack of understanding about how to interact with young people.

Crystal spoke of how interactions between youth and decision-makers were often intimidating for young people and made them feel devalued:

Kendall: What barriers are there to this happening?

Crystal: Think it's that... that generational understanding. That's the biggest thing. Like.. um, yeah! There's been plenty of times that I have gone into rooms with people that don't know how to interact with young people. So they either do it with kiddy gloves – they're like "Yup! That's great! We're gonna talk really positively! We're not gonna ask you any questions! We'll just make you feel really good!" or they'll come in being like "what do you know?" like "I can't understand why this is happening.". And yeah, even there's been

some times, where I've had, I've been sitting in a room, and not... people with me but the people we're talking to, start talking to each other and debating, with each other. And you're kinda standing there like... do I leave? Am I still valid in this? And so those kinda things are what's gonna make a young person like, "I'm not gonna go and do anything to do with officials".

Crystal's experiences of either being treated with 'kiddy gloves', disrespect, or completely ignored when trying to engage with decision-makers and the way this made her feel undervalued, points to a need for further training of decision-makers about how best to engage with young people (Ho, Clarke & Doherty, 2015). Kara also talked about her experiences with engagement between decision-makers and young people not being genuine:

Kara: Even just things like you know, I remember presenting to one of the council committees earlier this year, and I feel like everything I said was twisted to like meet their own agendas of individual councillors. Or you get the whole like "it's sooo nice to have young people come and present". It's like did you take in anything? Or are you just happy that young presented and took a photo of us to post on facebook? So it's just not genuine.

Fluffy also agreed with this and spoke of how decision-makers can tend to rely on experts who do not necessarily have the lived experience that young people do of their own lives and needs:

Fluffy: Youth have trouble with accessing [politics] because they feel very intimidated and discriminated against when they try. Cause we tend to just listen to experts and what their research and surveys show and stuff but not like listening to people and actually being like, "so what is it that you need...?"

Amy felt that this treatment of young people by adults led to a wider feeling of underappreciation and powerlessness amongst her peers:

Kendall: Do you think that the people that you hang around with know that it's their decision making and it's their city?

Amy: Um, my age group... I think they feel quite underappreciated in decision-making things. I don't think they'd even bother to do it just cause they feel that left out of things. I think we definitely get some very ageist comments saying you know, what would you know about it? You're only 14! But actually we know what we want for the future. We know that we're gonna have to live and deal with the city in the future, so I think we should be having a say as well.

She added that she had personally felt excluded from political conversations for years, largely because of her age and because she did not share her family's political views. This sense of exclusion and discrimination, from both decision-makers and her own family, proved frustrating for her:

Amy: You can say your opinion but the older generation will just be like, actually no that's a silly opinion, who would ever think that? And you just get completely waved away. When I think, they need to value the fact that it's a legitimate opinion, and it's for a reason. They just think, like immediately there might be this roadblock in their head that they go, "this is from a young person, it's completely irrelevant, like it's not important whatsoever".

Kendall: What's that like for you?

Amy: Extremely frustrating. And it's also disappointing as well. It makes you not want to talk again. Like I've had times when I can't talk to my mother about politics, just because, she gets so into it and completely waves me off. She just goes, "why are you my daughter? You don't share the same opinions as me."

This sense of Amy's that she is excluded both because of her age and because adults around her don't share the same political values and opinions, further shows the tokenism and lack of respect that can be part of adult-youth interactions concerning politics, and the barrier this presents to meaningful youth engagement in decision-making.

#### **4.4.3.2 Engagement methods**

Seven young people discussed how engagement methods need to be improved in order for young people to engage more in decision-making in Christchurch. However, there was somewhat of a tension between young people valuing traditional or modern methods of engagement, such as formal submissions as opposed to social media interaction.

Two young people still thought that traditional avenues such as contacting MPs and doing deputations to council were effective routes to make change, that were just underutilised by

youth. Kara commented on the success she had seen through traditional modes of engagement with local government:

Kendall: How could you and other young people make a difference about the issues that matter to you?

Kara: Um, just by.. particularly city council, like there's multiple ways. You contact your city councillor, there's an open forum at the start of each community board meeting, you talk for 5 minutes then you book a deputation, you do petitions, you do whatever. Um it does require a bit of work that's why it's hard if you're busy, but if you really wanna push through you just keep showing up, and you keep bringing it up.

Kendall: And you think persistence through those traditional channels would actually work to make change?

Kara: Yup. Yeah, cause I've heard a lot of like things happening around that way. And even you could go more informally, but I think the formal way still works, it just seems daunting.

Crystal also saw the value in face to face meetings and traditional avenues of interacting with decision-makers, and warned that social media on its own would not be enough to create real change or engagement from young people:

Crystal: All the time when I go to meetings with people they're like so does social media... do we just talk to them through social media? And I'm just like... yes.... To a degree. But use social media to invite them to come and talk to you. Or use it to get in contact with someone to go talk to them, cause the thing is, changes actually are in a room somewhere, talking to someone.

However, Diana expressed frustration that these traditional avenues were not effective at making change:

Kendall: How could you and other young people make a difference about the issues that matter to you?

Diana: (silence). Um... (sighs). We could... um, join youth participation groups! (sarcasm). We could, write letters to the government. Um, we could have nice conversations with nice people like you. Sorry, that was... (laughs), no. I mean, yeah. But no...

Kendall: So the traditional ways of making change happen aren't working? And actually we need to go down different routes to make change happen?

Diana: (nods) Yep, it isn't working.

As a less engaged young person that was not involved in youth participation groups in Christchurch, Ashley agreed with Diana that traditional methods of engagement and communication with young people were not working, and engagement needed to better reflect the spaces that young people interact in in their day to day lives:

Ashley: I think maybe to put it, maybe put it to kids in a different way and make them want to know about it and put it out there everywhere, you know, like no one our age would read the newspaper surely, no one watches the news, well I definitely didn't, I don't even now. That's probably why I don't know anything about politics, that doesn't relate to children, it doesn't relate to youth. So I definitely think make everyone aware in a way that they can understand, umm, would be a huge benefit for both sides, you know, kids would be more interested and they would now more so that they can have an opinion.

While Kara had earlier discussed the merit she saw in traditional modes of engagement, she also described the need to modernise engagement with young people to include social media and online platforms:

Kara: I think like even if it's just like, polling stations at your school, like a smart phone app where we just vote on things that like, on Instagram or facebook we just vote on like a thing in the community. So it's not difficult to get to. Like I think if we have to fill out an entire survey about things it can get quite tiring and I think we get survey's thrown our way all the time as young people but I don't think everyone wants to fill them out. Even I, who's quite an engaged young person, I've played them off sometimes because I'm like I have no time for this ten page survey! It is boring. So I think they need to reconstruct how they do that in Christchurch. And like, just in general. Around the world. Make it a way that youth can be involved in a way that's appealing to them.

James and Brad, too, discussed the need to modernise engagement with young people in Christchurch and widen out the accepted ways for youth to participate in local decision-making:

Kendall: So they're a bit stuck in the old traditional ways of doing things?

James: Yeah! Definitely. It's still like, we're open and ready to listen to your voice, but even the things they offer, it's not as far as they could go? I really like how the council offer the 5 mins, talk for 5 mins about any



issue at the start of their meetings, but not everyone can go during council hours. I'd love them to say, oh, just send us your video. As long as it's less than 5 mins we'll watch it during that time.

Brad: Hard.

James: Or like, if you wanna share your voice on an issue that we're talking about, and we put up a post on our fb page, we'll include whatever you write in the comments, if it's a submission we'll do that but I know you have to go through the process and it's kind of, I know they need some data or whatever, but that's often... like going to another website, it's not immediate in your life. It's something on the side. Whereas you kind of want participation to be part of what you do. And if it's not in the newsfeed... well then it's not!

(Laughter)

While two youth thought traditional engagement methods could be effective avenues of participation for young people in Christchurch, seven young people advocated for the need to modernise engagement methods to better appeal to youth. This notion that engagement methods are inherently unengaging to the community has also been reported in the literature as an argument against youth apathy, and an avenue for decision-makers to work on in order to foster young people's meaningful participation (see Hay, 2007).

#### **4.4.3.3 Formal processes**

Five young people talked about how formal processes, spaces and poor accessibility also serve as a barrier to youth participation in decision-making in Christchurch. Kara said she did not feel that formal processes in local government were catered well to youth:

Kendall: What do you think is the problem with young people not engaging? You said something about the processes?

Kara: Yeah I just think, like I've been working here for three months and I still don't understand. And that's shocking! And, like I, first of all they're not very friendly, like there's a lot of hoops to go jump through, and there's a lot of time between submission to hearing to decision, like that's really long and you don't know what's happening, and you don't know where your input's going. And I just think [hearings and meetings] are not catered towards young people. Like even the timing, what they require, like.. it's just... really confusing? You know they always have the hearings during the day. Like, why? Or you need to make your way to the

community board meeting in the middle of Woolston. And it's like, well I don't know how to get a bus there, and also I don't know that area, and mum told me it was scary... it's just things like that.

Crystal described how local government communication is often not designed in a way that makes engagement simple and enjoyable for youth:

Crystal: And... if it's for the people of the city, then, like... draw a diagram. Draw a map. Make it very simple and clear what you're thinking, and share it far and wide so that people can comment. Because I think the biggest thing that puts people off no matter what age, is if it's too jargon-y, if it's too confusing, if you're asking them in their response to write something really long, deliver something that they can't because they've got limited capacity, then you're actually shutting people out.

Here Crystal points to the way that inaccessible communication excludes young people and the wider community from decision-making. James and Brad also talked about the difficulties young people experience in accessing decision-making spaces, and how modernising engagement methods would help to make this easier:

Brad: It's just that it's not accessible for some.

James: Yeah, just ask any thirteen year old who's at school you know, on a Thursday when council meets, to leave school and go and do that. They've got to get permission to leave school, they've got to get an adult to take them...

Brad: Transport... all this time and effort...

James: Da da da da... and why can't they just make a video to send along for it to be included in the meeting? Or why can't they livestream? Or why can't they video conference or whatever?

Brad: It's just too youth friendly!

(laughter)

Charlie, too, commented that consultation in Christchurch was not open and inviting enough:

Kendall: What stops you from participating more?

Charlie: Um.... I don't know. I think maybe there are some sort of.. the way the systems are designed they're not very open for consultation. In the way that... instead of us saying to decision makers what we want, it should be the other way around. Really, understanding... just from a... on a very deep level understanding what young people's needs are.

This idea that decision-makers should have greater awareness and understanding of youth needs to supplement their consultation efforts further enforces the sense of exclusion young people in the study feel from local politics in Christchurch, and their desire to feel understood, valued and included in decision-making. Having outlined the perceived barriers to youth engaging with decision-makers, and to decision-makers engaging with youth, the following section describes the visions that young people in the study expressed for local politics and decision-making in the city.

## 4.5 Vision: Politics for the people

Crystal: If you're making a change, make sure you're actually doing it *with* people, not for people.

This final section will discuss young peoples' visions for local politics and decision-making in Christchurch post-disaster. As stated by Crystal above, many of the aspirations that youth expressed centred around the importance of *people* in politics, and young peoples' desires for a greater sense of inclusion. This section will discuss the need expressed by youth in the study for those who hold power in the city to prioritise people; their desires for inclusion and their visions for youth engagement; and their belief in the power of collective change and the Christchurch community being able to make a difference by coming together.

### 4.5.1 Prioritise people

When asked what they would say to someone who had the power to make change in the city, ten young people wanted decision-makers to prioritise people in politics. This included requesting that those in power 'go out into communities and talk to more people', that they 'cater to the vulnerable' members of the community, that they 'inspire young people to make change', and

most of all, that they *listen* to people's ideas and take them into consideration when making decisions in Christchurch.

Four youth talked about their aspirations for decision-makers to consult more with people in their community, to find out what it is that they are struggling with, and what they are hoping for.

Crystal talked of the importance of those in power not just relying on 'experts':

Kendall: If you could speak to someone who could change things in your city, what would you say to them?

Crystal: Um... I think... I think the first thing, if you're someone that can make a lot of change, talk to more people. Don't rely always on what your staff are telling you, or what you think the media's telling you. If you're making a change in the city, you need to be talking to the people of the city.

Van spoke of his concern that the people who are struggling the most are also the least likely to voice their struggles, and the need for decision-makers to reach out to them in particular:

Van: The people that are affected the most, from negligence, are those that, um, have the least capacity to express their concerns. And I think, those people are the ones that should be catered to first. Because they're going through hardships that they shouldn't have to go through, in a place where... resources do seem ample, but the way they're distributed can be pretty shit. And things could get better.

Roman also agreed with this, and focused especially on the Pacific community and those on the east side of Christchurch who feel especially excluded from decision-making:

Roman: With that question the first thing that came to mind was having the reserved community open up, and have a say, I guess, in the whole of Christchurch. Cause the east side I feel like is, like for me coming here, and seeing like, the Pacific community is quite reserved? I guess with uni they're out, but then the other side they're not really out.

Kendall: Like they're not really part of having a say?

Roman: Yeah, having a say. And just making them feel welcome to come in from the east.

Elsie talked about the role that decision-makers in Christchurch have in being role-models and inspiring others, particularly young people, to make change:

Elsie: Um, I think I'd just say to her, that, it would be good if she could inspire kids to make change. Cause... I'd love to but, it's funny with me saying it, but kids just don't think they can. If they tried they could. Yeah I'm just thinking cause everyone seems to just want to conform you know? And not be noticed, not stand out, and not try to be.. like, their own person.

This notion that young people often don't believe they can make change is backed up in the literature on youth internal political efficacy (Sheerin, 2007; Hayward, 2012). Six young people spoke passionately about the need for decision-makers to listen to Christchurch people, and put them first, including James and Brad's exchange below:

James: Are you prepared to hear the stuff that you might completely disagree with, to take that advice, and run with it? Because it's not about your own voice, if you are there to empower those who don't have a voice. Or people who are not as included. Just one more soundbite. You're voted as an elected representative, not an elective dictator.

(Agreement and laughter)

James: Or as an elected dick, as Brad just said.

Brad: Did I say that? Did I say that James?!

James: Yes you did!

Brad: I said "Yeah boy, get it"!

James: Oh I thought you said as an elected dick!

Brad: I 've got to stop mumbling.

James: (Smiling) I don't mind elected dick, that's kinda funny.

(Laughter)

One idea that James had was that decision-makers should actually work in the communities, with people, and travel around Christchurch connecting with citizens in their day-to-day roles:

James: Why does council even have offices? Should the staff just travel round the different parts of the community where people are? Just sit there and work there and then move onto somewhere else, where the need is?

Brad: How cool would that be.

This comment is in line with young people's wish for greater empathy from decision-makers, and the desire expressed by Charlie that those in power have a deeper understanding of youth needs. The need for decision-makers to listen more to the people of the city was also mirrored by Diana:

Kendall: If you could speak to someone who could change things in your city, what would you say to them?

Diana: You need to get your shit together! (Laughs) You need to get your shit together and understand how freaking easy it is to get over the bureaucracy! Get over it, get done with it, we're finished. We're running a real city now. And this is what we're gonna do. We're gonna listen to the minorities, we're gonna listen to the young people, we're gonna listen to anyone who is able to have their say because everyone will be able to have their say... Please just please do something cause I don't wanna move out of the city that I was raised in. Do something so that I don't feel like I belong somewhere else.

Diana described here the way that local politics relates to her sense of inclusion and belonging in the city, and how currently the lack of listening to people by decision-makers in Christchurch contributes to her feelings that she 'belongs somewhere else'. The connections between youth participation and belonging will be examined further in the discussion section of this chapter.

#### ***4.5.2 Desire for inclusion***

Throughout the interviews, young people's desire for political inclusion in the city post-disaster was clear. When asked about their visions for youth engagement in Christchurch, eight young people spoke of their desire that youth were more included in decision-making and politics, for example by becoming 'part of decision-making spaces', youth issues being everyone's issues,

feeling valued by decision-makers, and the importance that this could have for young people's sense of wellbeing and belonging. Kailtyn expressed her desire that young people become part of decision-making spaces, and for youth engagement be normalised in the city:

Kendall: What are your visions for young people in Christchurch engaging in decision-making?

Kara: Um I think this place should be full of young people. Like I think.. and obviously there's constraints cause everyone's based in different communities. Maybe we do need to have like community hubs, I don't know, at community board meetings. I just think it shouldn't be so much like "now we have the young people to present!" It should just be normal. Like it's every second or third person basically should be young. Like I think that's what the end product looks like, we have more young councillors, young community board members.

Diana shared this vision that young people become part of decision-making spaces, and fill decision-makers' roles:

Kendall: What are your visions for young people in Christchurch engaging in decision-making?

Diana: If I could dream? Um... um... okay. So I think... I would... see young people.. um... (sighs). Walking into the city council building, not being looked at weirdly, just walking in, um, then going where they need to go, knowing how to get there, and what they wanna do. The people, young people know so much about the city council that they can walk in there into the area that aren't actually restricted, and just look things up and ask questions, and maybe they're there for a meeting with the whole council, because maybe young people sit on the council. What? I'm shook. Like, maybe that could be a thing, quite possibly, maybe? How old is the youngest councillor? I don't know. 30-something. I'm sad. And I like him but I'm sad. My vision for young people engaging would be that not being a big deal, being a regular occurrence and that not being tokenism. It will just be young people want to be in those municipal roles, and young people want to do this. My vision for young people engaging in Christchurch is that, um, the youth action plan is well known about and it's like the young person thing in Christchurch. And we're all doing participatory budgeting, and we're all at the gardens, and we're all having the best time, from Ilam to the hood kids, and we're just living our best lives. As in like, you came from here, I came from here, but let's jam.

Diana again relates her vision of youth engagement in local decision-making to inclusion and connection, the coming together of young people in Christchurch from all areas and an increased sense of belonging. The idea of having young people in decision-making roles also relates to a

desire that youth and adults can co-exist well in decision-making spaces, often referred to as ‘co-design’ in the literature on youth development (Ungar, 2011).

David wanted young people’s issues to become everyone’s issues in his vision of youth engagement, and Fluffy expressed her desire that young people were truly valued by adults and decision-makers:

Kendall: What are your visions for young people in Christchurch engaging in decision-making?

Fluffy: Um. I think it would be the thing that we learnt in the co design thing. Where it was like, instead of treating youth as like a disabled group we should actually treat them like very.. um, what’s the word? Like, unique, smart people.

Finally, Van shared how he thought the effects of young people being engaged in politics could help to mitigate the fragmentation he sees in his generation:

Van: There are some of us that are very displaced, and maybe.. lost in a certain way. These are my own interpretations. Um. I think the fragmentation of our generation is a dangerous thing. Especially millennials. Yeah and I think, I dunno, I think it’s important for us to, as hard as it might sound, and as romantic as it might sound, to band together in some way and like, youth autonomy needs to be... championed. In a way that’s more inclusive, of everyone. Especially those who are marginalised, and underprivileged. Or maybe even closer to things like death than we are. Who might feel like, it’s not worth being here, and stuff like that.

Van here spoke of the way that inclusivity in politics and in the Christchurch community was essential for the health and wellbeing of young people who may be struggling, something that has also been recognised by governmental reports on youth post-disaster (New Zealand Government, 2011).

#### ***4.5.3 Power of the people***

Despite many young people’s frustration with decision-makers in Christchurch, it was interesting that many still held strong beliefs in the power of collective change when people band together, and the belief that young people as a collective can make a difference. When asked ‘how does



change happen around here?’ ten young people thought that it happened collectively, with people. Kara talked about the potential of grassroots change in Christchurch:

Kendall: How do you think change happens around here?

Kara: Hmmm..... ooh, that’s a good question. I dunno I think like a lot of it can actually come from grass roots I find? Like people just suggest something and then they connect with the right person. I actually think that’s the hardest part, you need to get to the right forum, the right person, and then it goes up and up, and people will get excited, and then change can happen.

Again, the importance of connections is talked about in being able to make change from the ‘bottom up’. Diana talked about the significance of Christchurch historically as a place where lots of important political and social change has happened:

Diana: We are the home of where women first got the vote. So, anyway, change happens around here with people who believe in that. With youth participation groups, change happens around here when someone is just like, you know what, they didn’t listen to me so I’m not gonna listen to them, and I’m doing this! And then the government’s like wo wo wo wo! We don’t like that, and they’re like, well it’s done now. You can either aid me in doing it or... its gonna happen anyway. Change happens in... communities. With people. With real people! With the people that... maybe the people down the road that I serve every day. Change happens with the kind of people I grew up with.

This belief that the people have power and can create change outside of mainstream political engagement is reinforced through young people’s descriptions of how they believe youth can make a difference about issues they care about in Christchurch. Charlie described the importance of young people coming together in order to create change:

Kendall: How could you and other young people make a difference about the issues that matter to you?

Charlie: Ah. Well, I think, what I said earlier about youth not having a collective voice because they’re individual people... sometimes I think youth that really agree on something have to.. have to actually, if they really believe in it, I think they have to band together and actually, really agitate for whatever it is that they’re looking for. Because I think that there’s really a lot of young people out there that may yearn for a particular thing, but they don’t know each other, or they don’t have a forum of which they can really, like... target that want.

Four young people talked about the need to give young people more power and influence in decision-making in Christchurch, and to feel trusted by decision-makers. Ray reiterated the importance of giving youth opportunities to engage with politics and people, and how giving them opportunities could show them that they do have the power to make change:

Kendall: How could you and other young people make a difference about the issues that matter to you?

Ray: Something interesting is that, when we were doing speeches in class, the teacher said that um, the speech topic had to be about if you could change one thing in the world what would it be? And, one person in my class just shouted out saying, we're only kids! We can't make a change in the world! To me it comes a lot about people... us being given the opportunity to not only um... actually change these issues, but being given the opportunity and the education to understand what these issues are. And just young people being given more opportunities to be able to change what they want to change is how change will happen in the city. Other young people are gonna be able to inspire other young people to also be able to make change. And then it's just gonna be a knock on effect and then everyone's gonna be making change!

Brad also agreed with the idea of challenging the notion that young people cannot make a difference, and wanted people to connect with each other and start conversations about things that mattered to them:

Brad: Stand up, speak. I reckon just start some conversations. Just in small things, and even challenging some people's logic around how much you can make a difference? Cause I know a lot of people say oh, what I wanna do is not even gonna make a difference. But actually it's like a ripple effect that's larger than what you can see at the time. Start some conversations, challenging the fact that youth voice does matter.. change the stigma around it.

This subsection has revealed young peoples' aspirations that the Christchurch community be prioritised when thinking about politics and making decisions for the city, and shown that despite their frustrated agency, the youth involved in youth participation groups in the city are still optimistic about the power of people to make change collectively. Their desires for inclusion, despite their experiences of exclusion from decision-making, serves to reinforce the importance of the community to local politics and the links between community participation and a sense of belonging, resilience and empowerment, particularly in a post-disaster context.

## 4.6 Discussion

The findings presented in this chapter challenge the notion that young people are apathetic and support emerging literature around youth agency and participation (Nissen, 2017; Hayward, 2012; Norris, 2003). Young leaders in this study clearly want to engage with decision-making in Christchurch, and continue to persist despite their ongoing exclusion several years post-earthquakes. It is interesting that in spite of the initial surge in youth participation with the 10 000 strong Student Volunteer Army in the immediate aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and recovery, youth who want to engage with decision-making in Christchurch and be part of the regeneration have found it increasingly difficult. The barriers youth articulated in this chapter serve as their own explanations for their political exclusion. While many of these barriers expressed have been reflected in other research with young people (Frank, 2006), this study is unique in the extent that youth put the responsibility for their exclusion on decision-makers, rather than on themselves. Despite the City Council and Regenerate Christchurch's good intentions for youth engagement and community consultation being expressed in multiple documents (CCC, 2017; Regenerate, 2017), that youth who are actively trying to engage report feeling tokenised and shut out of local politics in this study shows a disconnect between political rhetoric and reality (Peek, 2008). It also shows that power relationships between young people and decision-makers are still likely to be one of the most significant barriers to meaningful youth participation (Hart, 1992).

As well as reports of tokenism when trying to engage in local politics, a number of youth stated that they did not even feel *informed* about what was happening with the regeneration – the lowest levels of some participation models described in the literature (Shier, 2001). This lack of being informed, and tokenism when engaging with decision-makers, often leads to the sense of powerlessness and frustrated agency that young people expressed in this study at being unable to meaningfully participate in local politics and disaster recovery (Hayward, 2012). As seen in the next chapter and reflected in the Christchurch Youth Action Plan (2017), youth have numerous ideas for Christchurch as a city and what could improve their own lives, yet without being listened to by decision-makers, or even informed adequately about the regeneration, it is very difficult for them to be part of change-making processes in the city or to make a difference. While largely disillusioned by local politics, youth in this study still expressed an optimism about community,

grassroots and the power of Christchurch people to make change through coming together (Harris, 2017). Despite this, they also talked about a large number of barriers that inhibit this change from happening, and these would need to be addressed collaboratively in order for meaningful and effective youth participation to occur in Christchurch.

Participation forms an important part of young people's wellbeing and recovery post-disaster. Young people's experiences of exclusion and the detrimental effects of this have been reported in the literature on youth participation post-disaster (Peek, 2008; Peek et al., 2016). While being aware of youth vulnerability post-disaster remains important, this chapter supports the arguments of Peek (2008) that there is increasing need to recognise young people's potential to positively contribute to the regeneration of their communities. Supporting their agency and listening to their voices is hugely important, and there is a need to shift this from rhetoric to reality in Christchurch. The effects of this on young people's wellbeing, resilience, and ultimately their sense of belonging was recognised by youth interviewed in this study and is increasingly being documented in the literature on youth engagement (Keegan, 2017). The recognition that meaningful youth participation is difficult without support from decision-makers, has also been acknowledged both by youth in this study and in the wider literature (McCready & Dilworth, 2014). The findings in this chapter support a need for political systems to be transformed in order to enable people's participation (Hay, 2007), and decision-makers to be educated around supporting meaningful youth engagement (Stringer, 2018; Lavea-Timo, 2017). Ultimately there is a need for decision-makers and young people in Christchurch to work together to each other's and the city's mutual benefits, with youth agency recognised and encouraged; a sentiment that has been reported extensively in the literature (Peek, 2008; Stringer, 2018) and by young people themselves in this research.

## 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined young people's perspectives on youth engagement and decision-making in Christchurch, the barriers to their participation, and young people's visions of local politics for the future. Young people were given the opportunity to respond to the discourse of youth apathy, and were strong in their arguments that youth do care about their city and about

politics. Young people in the study valued the importance of youth voice and spoke of their own difficulties and barriers to making change in the city, despite considering themselves to be 'engaged youth'.

When reflecting on decision-making, youth interviewed expressed particular frustration about the process of change in Christchurch, including reporting that they did not see much change happening. The focus groups revealed the most intense discussions about issues where youth cared about the redevelopment of the city but reported that they did not feel like they could be part of even the minor changes that were happening, or that they could even be aware of what was happening with the regeneration, due to a lack of transparency and poor communication from decision-making bodies.

The focus group discussions of power and who makes decisions in the city were also commonly fraught with frustration, with young people expressing that youth in Christchurch did not have as much power as they wished, and that decision-makers often did not listen to young people or the wider community enough. Youth wanted interactions between adults and young people to be improved, engagement methods to be communicated better and modernised to reflect young people's own environments, and formal processes to be simplified to make it easier for the community to engage with politics. They expressed their desire that decision-makers focused more on the future, that they fostered empathy for the people they were serving, and that they communicated their priorities clearly to the public.

In their visions for the future, young people focused mainly on the idea that politics should be 'for the people'. They wanted decision-makers to prioritise their communities, and despite their sense of exclusion from decision-making they still believed that people have the power to create change from the grassroots by coming together collectively and agitating for what they believe in.

Ultimately, this desire to have people at the heart of politics relates to young people's frustrated agency: their experiences of being excluded from local politics and decision-making post-disaster, and their aspiration for a greater sense of inclusion and belonging. The following chapter follows on from youth experiences of exclusion that were prominent in this chapter, by discussing the perspectives of young people on Christchurch as a city and the regeneration.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Youth Perspectives on Christchurch and the Regeneration

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### 5.1 Introduction

Young people's perspectives on place have been argued to be important and frequently overlooked in the literature (White, Wyn and Robards, 2017), and the regeneration post-disaster has given the people of Christchurch a unique chance to re-develop their city. Youth interviewed for this research were asked about their views on their city and community, the regeneration, the issues and challenges that they see around them, and their visions for Christchurch moving forward. Overall, their experiences of exclusion and a desire for inclusion lies beneath the key themes of youth perspectives on place in Christchurch, similar to the previous chapter on youth perspectives on decision-making in the city. When youth in the study discussed place, they commonly brought questions about the built and natural environment back to the social and community level, and the importance (and challenge) of wellbeing and belonging for people in Christchurch post-disaster.

This chapter examines three key themes that emerged from the interview and focus group discussions with young people:

- 5.2 Their perspectives on *the regeneration* in Christchurch, looking at young people's descriptions about how the rebuild is going, and the positives and negatives that they see several years post-disaster.
- 5.3 The *challenging aspects of place* in Christchurch that lead to a sense of exclusion and make their recovery post-earthquakes more challenging, including the divisions youth see geographically between suburbs, the stigmatisation of particular

neighbourhoods, and their exclusion from private spaces within central city. This section also discusses the issues of housing and homelessness and whether to stay in Christchurch or go elsewhere, which young people identified as significant.

- 5.4 The *supportive aspects of place* in Christchurch that lead to a sense of inclusion, or are part of their visions for an inclusive city, and support young people in their recovery (see Cox et al., 2017). This section will discuss young people's favourite aspects of Christchurch and their visions, particular for a 'Garden City', a world-class transport system, and Christchurch becoming a 'place to be'.

While young people in the study were fairly unanimous about their exclusion from local politics and decision-making and their sense of frustrated agency post-disaster, as discussed in the previous chapter, there was greater variance about their attachment to place in Christchurch. Their perspectives on the regeneration appeared to be quite polarised, with some young people still optimistic with the city's recovery and progress and others hugely frustrated. However, there was still much overlap in the aspects of place that youth found challenging, and the aspects of place that they found supportive during the city's recovery. This chapter will discuss these themes in further detail and their implications for inclusive recovery efforts in Christchurch, as the regeneration of the city's built and natural environments continues post-disaster.

## 5.2 The Regeneration

Young people's perspectives on the regeneration were talked about in-depth during interviews and focus groups, with a variety of opinions emerging. Both positive and negative aspects of the regeneration were discussed when youth were asked how they thought it was going, although frustration was a key feature of young people's responses. This frustration centred around the perception that decision-makers might not be making the most of an opportunity to rebuild Christchurch, and a lack of future-focus. This section will outline young peoples' descriptions of Christchurch; their perspectives on the regeneration specifically and the progress that has been made; their favourite aspects; and what they would change.

### 5.2.1 Descriptions of Christchurch

When asked to describe Christchurch in a few words or sentences, young people in the study discussed aspects of place such as the size and appearance of the city, the people, the opportunities, or 'the vibe'. The most frequent way that Christchurch was described was in terms of its potential and as a city undergoing a process of change and growth, mentioned by ten people. Other common words included 'broken' (seven people), 'community' (six people), 'small' (five people) and 'flat' (five people). The contrasts between many of the young people's descriptions were interesting: youth described the city as both beautiful and broken, busy and calm, white and diverse; small and sprawling; people-centred and divided. This shows the breadth of young people's perceptions and their different observations of the place around them. These discrepancies in young people's descriptions are likely influenced by their background, their age, their values, and the places they spend the most time, and both positive and negative perceptions of Christchurch will be examined further in the themes in the following sections. The word cloud below in Figure 15 shows the most common words used by young people in the study to describe Christchurch.



Figure 15. Youth descriptions of Christchurch.



The following section now turns to discuss the positives that young people pointed out about the regeneration in Christchurch.

### 5.2.2 Positives

Young people were asked: “What would you say if someone asked you how the regeneration was going in Christchurch, and you were going to be completely honest with them?”. Seven youth in the study responded positively, that they either felt that it was ‘going well’, or were optimistic about the outcome. Below is one such response from Amy:

Amy: Um I think we get told that it’s quite slow, often but I don’t think it actually is. I think it’s going at a good rate that will actually ensure ... I mean, we could be doing it faster, but I think this will actually ensure like we have time to double check things and make sure that it’s really what we want. And of course like Rome wasn’t built in a day! It’s a big city as well. So I think it’s going at a reasonable rate, it’s definitely going well, and I think we’re having a city that people are gonna enjoy.

One interesting observation I made was that it was only females who spoke optimistically about the regeneration, while males in the interviews tended to have more neutral or critical responses.

When asked about what meaning the regeneration of Christchurch had for them, eight young people discussed how the rebuild means an ‘opportunity’ for the city and its people, and a ‘fresh start’, as seen below from Fluffy:

Kendall: What does the rebuild mean for you?

Fluffy: I think that, it’s allowing more people to sort of... recreate Christchurch to what you want it to be. So it... it’s cool, cause it’s like, the Margaret Mahy playground. So that would have allowed a space for youth to socialise and hang out and stuff, and just little things like that was just a good opportunity to create the city we wanted it to be. And like with Auckland that’s hard to do cause like, you can’t just please the people cause there’s already so many existing things and you’d have to just, demolish things, but because this was... this sounds so sad! But because this was an opportunity to make Christchurch whatever we wanted, we could create it into whatever we wanted it to be. And I thought that was really cool.

This appreciation that Fluffy had for the uniqueness of the opportunity Christchurch has to completely redesign itself post-disaster was also reflected in other young peoples' responses. The rebuild was brought up spontaneously by eight young people when asked what their favourite aspects of Christchurch as a city were - 'the regeneration' or the 'new infrastructure of the city' being one of their top highlights. Young people discussed a number of things here that they especially enjoyed, including the new places that have been developed post-earthquakes in the central city, as well as the art, murals and creativity that have arisen while the city is being rebuilt.

When asked specifically what their favourite aspects of the rebuild were during the interviews, thirteen young people said they liked the physical environment and the new spaces and places. Excerpts from Fluffy and the youth participation focus group emphasise their excitement about the new buildings:

Fluffy: And... one of the things that's not really people but it's like building wise, I love how like, 4 years ago there was nothing in city centre, and like while I've been here in the past 4 years you see like little buildings pop up and little stores and stuff and I think that's super exciting and I think we have really good, unique shopping places, and I love that.

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Kendall: What are your favourite parts about the regeneration of Christchurch?

Maria: Town, just town!

Brad: Town is looking more skux man, open space, more culture-y, more hip hop, more –

Maria: It's more contemporary! It's a whole lot more modern.. and that's really cool, like, you know we're known for like the old city, Christchurch... (murmurs of agreement) History... but you still have that sense! You know, it's still old, but you still have the modern coming in. Yeah so, I think that's what I like about it.

The art and murals were mentioned spontaneously by five young people in the study as something they really loved about Christchurch. An example of a famous piece of post-earthquake street art by Rone is pictured in Figure 16 below:



Figure 16. Street art by Rone on Worcester St.

Source: Dean Kozanic (2017)

Ashley linked this 'burst of creativity' that has arisen in Christchurch directly to the earthquakes:

Kendall: So you think the earthquake gave [the city] that opportunity, to be creative?

Ashley: For sure. I think it's in all the horrible, you know it was horrible, the earthquakes were terrible and devastating, but I think it's really given Christchurch the chance to grow in so many ways.

Van also talked about the positive impact that the art and murals have on the people of the city:

Kendall: What are your favourite parts about the regeneration of Christchurch?

Van: Does the graffiti factor into that much? Yeah. When my friend's mum took me around Christchurch I saw a lot of the street art and stuff. I realised, oh that's part of it you know.. people expressing... maybe it doesn't have to do with the earthquakes.. maybe it does, maybe it has more to do with the regeneration of the city. But I dunno, just, seeing art in places which look infrastructurally vulnerable. It is a very, just seeing colour blossom in places that look like (fart noise), I suppose it's very.. it kind of... it shows that, it's a very human led attempt to kind of inject hope or liveliness back into what was considered a very traumatic event.

Kendall: Creativity and art coming out of the rubble.

Van: (nodding) Yeah, yeah.

In terms of the environment, three young people spoke of the opportunity Christchurch has with the regeneration to create a sustainable city with less environmental impact:

Kendall: What are your favourite parts of the rebuild?

Diana: I like that Christchurch is getting back its groove its edge, and that we do have that chance to, not um, throw the world under the bus! Um as a city. As in environmentally. And we have a chance! And we're still.... We still have a chance, and it's this close to being too late. Like... not just for Christchurch doing that but, for the world, so like... can we do it?

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James: Um and just also actually, [I love] Christchurch calls to take a stand on climate change and um, most of our councillors now driving electric vehicles and those kinds of things, they're trying to lead.

A popular topic brought by seven young people was how much they valued the smaller initiatives that arose post-disaster, particularly local groups like Gapfiller that worked hard to create unique spaces in the central city:

Elsie: I like the fact that everyone's kept on going working really hard after the earthquakes. Like I know, still, that was a whole six years ago, but there were all these events and... cool things like.. the Gapfiller things? They're really cool.

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Ray: ...things like Gapfiller is pretty - Gapfiller especially in the city centre like the youth space, like that, um, arcade game thing, like they're pretty cool.

It was interesting that the young people interviewed talked most passionately about the smaller parts of the regeneration, such as the street art, local groups and community initiatives that have been created post-earthquakes, rather than about large new buildings or facilities. It is these smaller initiatives too and the creativity that emerged in the regeneration of Christchurch that has garnered international attention and praise (New York Times, 2014).

While this subsection has considered the positives of the Christchurch regeneration from the perspectives of young people in the study, the following subsection examines the negatives or more challenging aspects of the regeneration from their point of view.

### 5.2.3 Negatives

When asked their opinions on the progress that has been made during the regeneration, whether participants thought it was 'going well' or 'not going well' was relatively equal, with seven people speaking positively about it, and six speaking more negatively about it. However, eleven people brought up issues that they perceived about the regeneration of Christchurch without being prompted. Diana and Oliver gave two responses to the question that showed their frustration with the lack of progress:

Kendall: If someone asked you about the regeneration of Christchurch and how it's going, what would you say?

Diana: (Sigh). Can that be my answer? Um.. no. It's going slowly. It's going... um... it's going.... It's going not how I expected it to go. I was 12 when the earthquake happened, and I expected more stuff by now. And all my friends who are about the same age or a little bit older, expected more stuff by now. It's going like a place that doesn't want to be rebuilt.

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Oliver: Umm, the Christchurch rebuild is the cockroach under the refrigerator that won't die. It's there, it's scuttling around, everyone's complaining about it, they can smell it from afar from their bedrooms, but no, no one's got the swatter and no one actually wants to lift up the fridge, pay the fee of getting someone in to lift up the fridge and kill it. I feel like that's what the rebuild is like. Ah it's an ongoing battle, and there are only a few soldiers that actually want to fight.

Kendall: So, it sounds like people have got a bit sick of it?

Oliver: Yeah, it's worn thin... for sure.

Of the eleven young people who brought up issues that they saw with the regeneration, unprompted, some of the issues discussed included: the 'slow speed' of the rebuild; the 'lack of transparency' from decision-makers; the rebuild being 'held back' by money and debt; buildings for

businesses rather than people; not enough progress being made; a lot of pain caused (with school closures and mergers, and insurance issues); houses that were still not fixed; lack of focus on environmentalism and future-thinking; 'not enough energy and people living in the city centre'; and community exhaustion with 'not enough people wanting to fight' anymore.

James and Brad both spoke of the hurt that has been caused in Christchurch by the way things have been handled in the recovery period:

James: And then a lot of the pain that has been caused, I don't think decision makers have actually understood or articulated that they understand. Like the school closures, that's really close to where you live. The school closures in Phillipstown and stuff. And that broke so many people's hearts.

Brad: That broke my heart. It was hard. It was like, I don't know... I went there and so I went to Burnside and Burnside wasn't really a good school for me, I went to Phillipstown for about three years, and it changed my idea and conception of school. It was crazy, like my concept of school. It was fun, my teachers really cared, it was lively, it was weird. And then it was just gone. Damn.

James: So that increased the hurt. The fact that people still have insurance things. It's not fun. Do these people in Wellington actually know what it's like? I don't think they do.

Again, the lack of empathy from decision-makers about what the people of Christchurch were going through was an important issue for James. David was one of five people that talked about the main issue he had with the regeneration being the lack of transparency from decision-makers, and not really knowing what is going on:

Kendall: How would you say the regeneration is going?

David: Slow. But... slow and... we don't know why because it's never communicated well to us.

Kendall: So, not very transparent, like no one really knows what's going on?

David: I think someone somewhere knows. I just think that like it would be nice if everyone else knew. because like I said, I'm not a structural engineer and I'm not a bureaucrat, and to me they're the two things that would slow progress right... how fast can you physically go, if you built everything at optimal speed, and

then the bureaucracy that stops optimal speed being achieved. And I don't know how those two forces play out in reality because no one tells us.

Kendall: But you wanna know?

David: Oh It would be great. if they said, look, we need to decide on this, this, this and this and this is how we're deciding it, this is the time frame we're looking at...

Charlie and Diana both talked about their disappointment and frustration that the regeneration may not be making the most of the opportunity to focus on the environment more:

Charlie: I think, specifically with the central city I think the way they've done it with the rebuild is not the best. I'm not really very excited about it the way I was when, sort of not long after the earthquake happened, I would have been like 13 then, I was thinking like wow! This is gonna be really cool, we're gonna have like, you know, green rooftop building all around. But all they seem to have built is just like four story glass and concrete accountancy firms and things like that. And I'm just like, I just walk around and I'm like.... Yeah. It's, it looks kind of nice, but the same time it's not really bringing any energy into the city. There needs to be more people actually living in the central city to make it more lively and bring people in. I think that's a really big problem.

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Diana: Like we need to, hustle it up and hurry and get to where the rest of the world are, basically! Cause it's just like, it's like we're modern and diverse, or trying to be, and we're kind of in this zone of like, ooh do we go environmentally friendly because we have all the possibilities to because we're literally rebuilding a city? But, no, it's too expensive and hard and like, so we're in this weird place where we're not making the decisions, and it's like, but it's so.. easy to see for us.

This sense of frustration about the regeneration not meeting their expectations was common amongst young people interviewed in the study, though the source of their frustration was often about different aspects of the rebuild. The following section now turns to aspects of the city and regeneration that young people described as particularly challenging for their recovery, wellbeing, and sense of belonging in Christchurch.

### 5.3 Challenging aspects of place

Previous research has examined the aspects that support young people in their recovery post-disaster (Cox et al., 2017) although there is less in the literature that has focused on the aspects of recovery that are challenging to young people and their sense of inclusion and wellbeing. Youth in the interviews were asked what the issues and challenges were that they saw around Christchurch. As with their favourite aspects of the city, young people were again largely in agreement with each other about their least favourite aspects and a small number of common themes emerged. The most common of these themes were 'divisions' (nine people) and 'employment' (nine people). Divisions refers to a number of smaller subthemes, including the separations youth perceive between suburbs, stigmatisation of certain neighbourhoods, conflict within approaches to rebuilding Christchurch, and feeling excluded from spaces in the central city. Employment relates to the challenge for young people to find work in the city, either while they are studying or post-degree. Other key issues included the wellbeing of people in the city, transport and roading, housing and homelessness, the rebuild and a lack of spaces and events for young people. Figure 17 below presents a visualisation of their responses:



Figure 17. Issues and challenges expressed about Christchurch as a city.



The following subsections will elaborate on these themes, focusing particularly on ‘divisions’, ‘housing and homelessness’ and young people’s dilemma of whether to stay in Christchurch or leave. Transport and roading, wellbeing, and boredom are addressed separately later in this chapter, when describing supportive aspects of place and young people’s aspirations for the city.

### **5.3.1 Divisions**

When discussing how they would describe Christchurch, the issues that they perceive, and what they wish they could change in their visions for the city, one of the most common responses discussed by nine young people in the study centred around divisions in the city. These geographic divisions were perceived between suburbs, and within suburbs, and were also spontaneously referred to as ‘bubbles’ by five young people. Other divisions described as being particularly challenging include the east being neglected and particular suburbs in the city being stigmatised. The modern versus historic divide was noted as another tension between people and place in Christchurch, with divisions between people wanting to retain the older, more traditional aspects of the city and those who want to modernise it. Youth exclusion from the city was talked about as a particular issue by young people who felt that they didn’t have a ‘right’ to be in central city, as spaces were often private instead of public and were not youth friendly. This discussion of bubbles and divisions is linked to young people’s feelings of exclusion from the city and being particularly challenging for them in terms of their own recovery post-disaster.

#### ***Divisions Between Suburbs***

Geographic divisions were talked about in the interviews as a key issue for young people. Five people spoke of the ‘bubbles’, divisions or barriers they perceived between different suburbs in Christchurch, with divisions due to geography (east vs west), class and age. Charlie spoke of the sameness of people living in each area, in terms of age:

Kendall: What are the biggest issues that you see around here?

Charlie: Um, I think there’s probably a bit too much of like, a certain kind of people living in one particular place. Yeah it’s just old people but I kind of wish there were more of a different variety of people living in the..

in the area. Um, I think, if people were keen on it, breaking down those invisible barriers between the suburbs... I think that [would be] quite good.

This desire to break down barriers was also expressed by David, who felt uncomfortable with the level of difference between many suburbs in Christchurch in terms of class:

Kendall: What are the biggest issues that you see around here?

David: So I feel like a lot of the issues that Christchurch faces, and that the majority of Christchurch faces are, I don't think people are oblivious in Redcliffs but I feel like... it's not, it feels like a different part! It doesn't feel like Christchurch, it really doesn't feel like Christchurch, cause even though they had an earthquake and it didn't have massive rebuilding... I feel like, it feels completely foreign going from Bryndwr to Redcliffs.

Kendall: So, it's like we all live in separate bubbles?

David: (nodding) Yeah. It really is.

Here David tied in the effects that living in 'separate bubbles' can have on people, that they are less aware of what is going on around them and what other communities may be experiencing in different areas of Christchurch. These social and geographic divisions can thus lead to a lack of empathy and understanding of the lives of other people (Haller, 2017). Kara also spoke about this being her main issue:

Kendall: What are the biggest issues that you see around here?

Kara: Hmmm.. interesting. Um... I think there's quite a large disconnect between the different suburbs. I can still like... growing up you get those schools, but I think it's more representative of east vs west or whatever rather than schools, now I think it's getting better there. Even looking for a flat some people just won't even consider going to different parts of town. I've had friends that have probably lived in say Fendalton their whole lives but have never been to Parklands or whatever. And like, we are quite spread out but there's just this massive disconnect and people get quite stuck into what they do and what they know. And then I feel like what comes from that is you get people who are quite privileged and don't understand the other issues that are going on.

Kendall: Why do you think there is such a disconnect between those suburbs?

Kara: Um... for some of them it's not even because of like affluence. I think, yeah I went out to Parklands the other day and a lot of people would never go out to Parklands or Waimairi Beach. They just view it as too far or there's nothing exciting to draw them to it. Maybe they view it as all the same for all suburbs but um, I think people are quite complacent with what they have.

Kara related the reason for people not travelling to particular suburbs in Christchurch to people's complacency and a lack of 'pull factors' (e.g. Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), though hinted that some could be to do with class divisions as well. Stereotypes and divisions due to class or wealth were brought up by four young people in the interviews as an issue that they perceived in Christchurch:

Charlie: Ah, there's like a pretty big divide between rich and poor. Cause I think in other cities when you go through them, they're kinda like, you couldn't really tell what the poor part and what the rich part is in say Dunedin or Wellington or something like that, but in Christchurch it's like "you are now entering the zone for this!". And it's kind of like, it's very sort of separated into different areas.

Oliver talked of the common tendency of Christchurch people to stereotype others based on their school or area they live in, stereotypes that are based largely on wealth and class:

Oliver: I feel like Christchurch has a huge, really negative, ah what's the word? ability to stereotype people, based on where they live or the school they come from, specifically the school they come from, that happens all the bloody time, don't get me started! So that's something that needs to be cracked down on.

This section on the 'bubbles' and divisions observed by young people in Christchurch relates to the literature within geography on geographic divisions and stigma, where divided 'zones' within a city have been shown to affect people's wellbeing, feelings of inclusion, and place attachment (Lawson, 2007). Interestingly, 'bubbles' were also brought up in Sylvia Nissen's (2017) dissertation when she discussed politics and agency with New Zealand students.

### ***Divisions Within Suburbs***

Not only did youth discuss the divisions they noticed between suburbs, but four youth also noted divisions within suburbs. While Charlie mentioned the 'sameness' within suburbs as an issue due to

the lack of diversity, Crystal noted how divisions were emerging in some suburbs that were more diverse:

Kendall: What issues do you see in your local community?

Crystal: So there is... there is more young people in the area.. and there are high school students as well... so there is a whole bunch of young people, and there are also... also are some issues with them, that do make the media sometimes. But then there's also those people like my nana's generation. But then they might be living next door to a young family, or just to some teenagers, who... they might be some 18 year olds that go to uni and are just renting a flat. So there's this weird situation where there's different pockets, of different generations, and like even near my house there's like... [one street] which used to be state housing, and I think some of them are still state houses, but some of them have been sold off... and that's still, like an area of welfare, in the middle of an area that's got.. more wealthier people and like, low income people. Kind of like, this weird divide, between streets, sometimes.

Here Crystal notes that she sees divisions in her community between class or wealth and between generations. I asked her what she thought the effect was of these divisions in age:

Crystal: Um... think it's just really like... in public, you can notice really like, there are groups of old people all walking round together. And there'll be groups of young people, and sometimes there is clashes between that.

The potential for these divisions within suburbs to lead to conflict between groups is mentioned above by Crystal, and goes against young people's desire for an inclusive city. Overall, this discussion of geographic bubbles and divisions was a central part of the exclusion that youth saw within Christchurch, and pointed out as one of the biggest challenges that the city was facing.

### ***Neglect of the East***

Six young people who were interviewed were frustrated at the perceived exclusion of particular parts of the city in the regeneration, especially the neglect of the east side of Christchurch. Ashley grew up on the east side of the city and was concerned at the differential treatment those suburbs had received post-earthquakes:

Kendall: What would you change about the way things are going?

Ashley: I think there's still a lot of places around Christchurch, especially on the east side that are almost deserted, umm, so I know that they're pushing for the [central] city because obviously that is the hub of Christchurch, but I definitely think there is still a lot of people that are still sort of living in areas which haven't really been even looked at, so I think they should spend a little bit more time outside of the city, and I know they are, but it's taking a long time. So I think yeah, maybe for the outer suburbs they could definitely sort of speed up a little bit and pay more attention to sort of the residential side of Christchurch rather than sort of the city side of town.

Kendall: And you see especially the east has been neglected?

Ashley: Definitely, It's been neglected, yeah. That's definitely the word. Obviously the city makes us money, ya know so that's where the money is, in the city, but I feel like we should look after our own.

In trying to understand why the east was being more neglected than other areas, Ashley put it down to economic reasons that it was more profitable to focus the regeneration on the central city than eastern suburbs. She felt a sense of sadness and unfairness however for the people living in the area who were not being looked after. This sentiment was mirrored by Charlie:

Charlie: Um, I found that, in the areas I live in. they're generally like, the nice areas I suppose, and they are near constantly repairing or fixing or replacing or doing something to the road near where I live, and it's like... and then you go to the east side of town, and it seems like they've not really done anything. And it's like, why are you repetitively digging up the road, putting a new pipe or wire or something in and resurfacing it or putting in a lane of some kind when you're not doing anything on the other side of town? I feel it's just kind of unfair, I'm not... yeah it's just something I've noticed. I don't know whether it's an actual thing or whether it's just my conspiracy theory, but... yeah.

Kendall: There seems to be a bit of imbalance of treatment between the different sides of Christchurch?

Charlie: Yeah. Maybe the council kind of think, well, it's kind of a dead zone anyway, we'll kind of just put it on the back burner now and make sure the rest of stuff that's already active is nice... I don't know what they're doing but.. I dunno. Yeah.

Charlie noticed the difference in roading work on the east side compared to other parts of Christchurch. This was also spoken about with frustration by Maria:

Maria: That kind of annoys me, because like, I used to love going to the east side, just to like the beach and stuff, but we try to avoid it now because, you know the roads are just terrible. And what annoys me even more is that they worked on our street maybe like 3 times this year, when they didn't really need to work on it. They could've been working somewhere else that really needed it! They were working in our area, like come on you don't need to be working here. There's other areas that are worse off. And I just think that there isn't, you know where priority should be given, it's not. You know that priority isn't given into that area. It's maybe the areas where people mostly go to that, they try and make like nice, but it's not fair for the other areas that should be having that, you know the council taking care of that area.

James: That's such a good point, because if Merivale was hit by the earthquake as bad as the east side had been I'm so sure it would have been rebuilt and quickly.

Maria: Yes, definitely.

Young people recognised that the areas where more people went to were prioritised first, but James also noted that higher socioeconomic suburbs such as Merivale would likely have been rebuilt much quicker, showing his perceptions that class and ethnic differences may be other potential reasons for the east's differential treatment. This sense of neglect and stigmatisation of the east was also reflected in Neville's (2016) thesis where young people from the east of Christchurch were interviewed about their neighbourhoods.

### ***Stigma of Suburbs***

In line with the 'bubbles' youth saw both between and within suburbs, and the neglect of the east, young people also discussed exclusion through the stigmatisation of suburbs in Christchurch, that was based on the concentration of people living there. Kara talked about the stigmatisation of students in Ilam that was often unfair:

Kara: There's a really.. okay so there was an article a couple weeks ago about how Ilam is a slum or something like that, and you know, it's just disgusting that there's all these things going round and we're treating it like this. Like maybe there's a couple of bad eggs or whatever but most of the reasons that people's lawns aren't down is the landlord actually has in the contract that they'll be doing it and it's never been done. And I've gone to so many friend's flats, they haven't damaged them, they *got* the flat damaged with holes and stuff. Like you actually get the slum landlords that don't wanna do much and people are getting quite sick.

Kendall: So do you feel like there's a stigma of Ilam?

Kara: Yeah, I don't know if it... it's not particularly bad but it's getting there. And I imagine all the residents are like oh no we've got students moving in next door or whatever. And like, students have a bad enough rep that they hate all students but maybe they see a group of youngish boys moving in together and they're like "oh no"! It definitely depends. There's been lots of good students.

Crystal also noted how people can stigmatise and stereotype others based on their ethnicity, and assume that they are from a particular part of Christchurch:

Crystal: And... um.. even, when I walk around sometimes I can notice the different like... backgrounds that people might have, so there is sometimes, more playing on stereotypes that can be done. That can be easy for some people to understand where they live, but can also blind them from the actual person that they're seeing.

Crystal's mention that this stereotyping can blind people from seeing the actual person, can be linked to David's suggestion that the separate bubbles between suburbs in Christchurch leads to a certain 'oblivious-ness' of others who are different from them. The desire to transcend differences and come together was discussed by three people in the research, further demonstrating the importance of inclusion for young people – not just for themselves, but for all people in Christchurch.

### ***Modern vs Historic Divisions***

The other tension that three young people discussed with the regeneration of Christchurch were the divisions between people based on whether they wanted the city to hold on to the past, or move toward the future. Both Crystal and Oliver talked about this:

Kendall: What are the biggest challenges that you see Christchurch as a city facing?

Crystal: Um... think it's... kind of that like, modern versus historic, divide. Like, yeah especially with the earthquake, that's when it became more apparent. Like, there were people that were very traditional, like, we need to keep the same things from the past, like even the streets. There was that thing about changing all the

one ways, and some people were not happy for that, some people completely happy for that. And... yeah, it's that thing that there's a lot of people... especially my mum being a teacher, all the kids that have gone through her school now... weren't aware, with the earthquake. And they've got 5 year olds, who weren't born, and so there's this generation that are so about the past, and this generation that have no clue what the past was.

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Oliver: There are almost two sides that I see falling within Prebbleton in that one is the OG people that have been there all along and then the second, the people that have come in post-earthquake and there's a bit of conflict between them in that they're two different cultures in a way, like we want to keep the old Prebbleton and then the other side is, well we've got all these fresh ideas, but we get that you want to have your new culture and stuff... yeah, there's definitely that, butting heads...

This conflict between 'modern and historic' or 'old and new' is another recognition of difference amongst the people of Christchurch and their ideas for the city's regeneration.

### *Exclusion from Central City*

The final discussion about exclusion in terms of divisions within the city concerned the central city, and young people's feelings of exclusion based upon their lack of disposable income:

Crystal: Normally when we do the text roundings like "where do we go?", we always end up in town. Because, mm yeah for us like we're in that age bracket where we have money, but we don't have a lot of money. And you normally are catching up not for like an hour, like when you're at high school you used to see your friends all the time. You're catching up all the time, you're catching up for like three hours, so you need a lot of different options in those three hours. I think I was having a conversation with someone recently about the fact that in town even, lots of things have something to do with money. So like if you want to sit down somewhere you're gonna have to have the money to buy something to kind of give you the right to sit down there.

Kendall: So there's that need for more places where you don't have to pay to sit?

Crystal: Yep. Definitely.

Crystal felt that there was a lack of public space in the city, places that were free for the public to use, and the need to have money to buy things excluded her friend group from being in many



spaces. Kara also talked about this exclusion of young people from central city, and related it to youth feeling like they do not belong here:

Kendall: What do you think a city like Christchurch would need to make young people feel like this is my place?

Kara: Mm.. um. Firstly they need to ask young people what they want. But like, it is actually having like cheap or free places. That's something that even bothers me. Like I have a bit of money but not much, um, I can't just hang out somewhere, there's nowhere to just go sit or whatever. Even just like the fact that all the shops here are geared towards like a higher end.. I don't think it's even just young people that suffer from that. It's like, people on lower incomes as well. Um, I'm not sure what exactly it is, like a youth space is great but.. I don't think just one will do the job, like we do need multiple. And there needs to be like activities and stuff round in different communities, or whatever... um but what that looks like depends on each community.

Kendall: So there's a lot of private places in the city that young people feel locked out of?

Kara: Yeah! Well you get that whole imposter syndrome. Like, why am I here hanging around, first of all if you're under 18 you shouldn't be hanging around near Stranger's Lane or something, but you know like you feel like you can't afford to be here, or you're too young. I get that all the time, I'm not rich enough to be here. You do actually feel yourself getting looked down on cause you're a bit younger. But if I go dressed like this, in my work clothes, it's fine. But if I wasn't...

Kara mentioned that while this lack of public spaces in the city centre excluded many young people, it also excluded people on lower incomes, ultimately leading to a sense of being an 'imposter' and not feeling welcome in certain spaces. This tension between young people's access to public and private space, and feelings of welcomeness in cities that often lack 'youth-friendly spaces' has also been documented in the literature (Hopkins, 2013). The follow subsection discusses another key challenge for young people in the city – housing and homelessness.

### 5.3.2 Housing and Homelessness

Housing and homelessness were issues of particular importance to seven young people in the study. Youth talked about the poor quality of housing in their neighbourhoods as being a challenge, particularly for students, and youth of all ages in the study spontaneously brought up

homelessness and how much of a concern this was for them to see people excluded from reasonably living standards and not having their basic needs met.

Charlie was one of three youth who spoke of the poor housing quality he saw in Christchurch, and that he himself had lived in personally:

Charlie: Um. I think we've got a big problem with quality of housing. I think the housing itself is not um, they're quite cold. Especially cause I've lived in rental properties all my life. Some houses you get, it's a bit hit and miss... so yeah.

Fluffy and Kara were two of four young people who were upset that the rates of homeless people in Christchurch seemed to be increasing (Radio New Zealand, 2016):

Fluffy: I think our housing's really bad. Cause like, we have a lot of homeless people in Christchurch, and that's really sad. Cause I see them often, like all the time. And I feel really really sad when I see them. Yeah.

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Kara: Homelessness is a huge issue. Like it's just become worse and worse, and I don't why? Like I don't know what's going on to make it worse but something needs to be done.

These excerpts on homelessness continue to show how deeply concerned many youth in the study were at the exclusion of others, and their sense of social justice and desire to help those who were struggling. These issues of poor-quality housing and homelessness relate to the overall theme of wellbeing and inclusion, in that youth wanted all of the people of the city to be living well, in healthy homes and to have their basic needs met. Young people expressed that they did not think enough was being done in the city to change this.

### 5.3.3 Do I Stay or Do I Go?

Diana: It's that whole thing of like, I think young people face this issue, of do I stay or do I go? Because ... and I'm facing this issue, because, lots of young people who have grown up here, um, they're more diverse then they seem, or they're growing into that. Or, they have kinda caught up with the world, that their parents might not have yet, and they're kind of like "Oh I wanna go here and here or oh I wanna move here!" Um, cause there's more to do here. And they just kind of go.

In the interviews, seven young people spontaneously brought up a tension between whether they would stay in Christchurch or whether they would leave. Responses were relatively balanced, with three youth describing how Christchurch would 'always be home' to them and that they did not want to leave their friends and family, and four youth talking of how they would leave Christchurch because they did not feel like they belonged here, or they could not find the employment that they wanted.

Crystal and David both observed that a high number of people they knew in high school had left the city:

Crystal: Some people I know, especially people when they leave high school always want to get out of town, because sometimes they feel like cause everyone knows them they need to reinvent themselves. So that's one of the downsides of it because I think "how many kids really stay?". It's kind of like maybe, 45%. Not completely half, because like even my year group, we didn't have everyone go to tertiary education. But they all found something, and they tried to get out. Yeah, none of them went to Auckland, but they all either went to Dunedin or Wellington or they're just working, but they're working to try get a job in another place 'round New Zealand.

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Kendall: Do you feel that a lot of people that you grew up with are leaving Christchurch?

Crystal: Like, almost all of them. All of my group of friends from high school, I think there's like 10 people in Christchurch. including me, three of them would be in Christchurch after... So they're all the ones who have gone off and got like professions and like jobs, like. They left the city for university options, well some of them did, and some of them are now leaving, also who stayed in Christchurch, because of work, everyone's gone to Wellington.

When asked about the reason they thought young people were leaving, youth related it to a lack of employment or education options in the city, or wanting to "leave behind their reputations" and build new ones elsewhere. Diana linked her own desire to leave to not being able to 'do what she wants to do here':

Diana: I... have been a lot of places and done a lot of things for my age. So, I know somewhat where I wanna go and wanna live... and it makes me sad that it's not Christchurch but it kind of has to not be, because I can't,

I can't do that here! It makes me sad that I can't do what I wanna do, you know? And I feel like a lot of young people face that.

In the interviews, Diana discussed how Christchurch did not feel like home to her despite living here for her entire life, mainly due to the divisions between people and the stereotyping she had experienced that contributed to her feeling that she did not belong. However, other young people such as Ashley spoke of their ties with friends and family here, their childhood memories, and how Christchurch would always be home to them:

Kendall: What was that like for you, being away for a couple of years and then coming back to Christchurch?

Ashley: It was actually surprising, I felt surprisingly emotional, seeing, like I didn't even really get the chance to say goodbye, yah know, we left that day [of the earthquakes] and we just didn't come back, it was quite hard to see it and I felt quite bad that I wasn't here. I really didn't want to leave and I felt like quite like I'd abandoned my city, I felt terrible, I felt really guilty, but it was amazing, it was incredible how it looked after a couple of years.

Kendall: Do you feel like Christchurch is home for you?

Ashley: Yes, 100%.

Kendall: Do you think you'll stay here?

Ashley: Yeah. I think we would like to venture, but Christchurch will always be my place, for sure.

Again this theme relates to a sense of inclusion and exclusion in the city, with those feeling more included and accepted through having close connections with friends and family and greater attachment to place wanting to stay, and those feeling more on the outside of the city and their communities wanting to leave.

Having discussed the central challenging aspects of Christchurch that young people in the study expressed as particular issues for them and contributing to a sense of exclusion, including divisions, housing and homelessness, and whether to stay or leave, the following section will address what

they identified as supportive aspects of the city that enhanced their wellbeing, feelings of inclusion, and supported their recovery.

## 5.4 Supportive aspects of place

In discussions about Christchurch and the regeneration, there were certain aspects of the city that young people discussed as being supportive of their wellbeing and inclusion. They also described their visions for the city as it continues to be rebuilt post-disaster, in terms of a place that would best support their own recovery after the earthquakes and enable them to flourish. This section will therefore outline the supportive aspects of place as described by youth in the study. Their favourite aspects of the city will be examined, before examining the most prominent theme of ‘the Garden City’ in more detail. The section will then outline the visions that young people expressed for their city and address the themes of transport and ‘a place to be’ in more detail. Overall, young people in this study were particularly supported in their recovery by the natural environment, and gardens and greenery in Christchurch, which they found helpful for their wellbeing, recreation and mental health. Their main visions for Christchurch were of a ‘world-class’ public transport system, and for the city to become ‘a place to be’, reflecting their desires for easy mobility and for the city to have a vibrant energy with lots of things to do and places to go.

### 5.4.1 Favourite Aspects

Youth in the study were asked what their favourite things about Christchurch were, in terms of place rather than the social aspects of the people and community. Several main themes emerged from the eighteen youth interviewed. The theme of the natural environment was the most common response answered by eleven young people, with them describing enjoying the green, trees, and gardens in Christchurch and its reputation as the Garden City. The rebuild and opportunities available was the second most common response, with eight young people discussing this. Next most common was “proximity”, the city’s closeness to everything that was noted by six people, and the “vibe” of Christchurch as being slow, calm and laid-back, that was noted by five people. Transport was also noted by three people as being one of their favourite

parts of the city. The word cloud below in Figure 18 presents a visualisation of their answers, and the following section will outline the main theme of ‘the Garden City’ in greater detail.



Figure 18. Youth favourite aspects of Christchurch post-disaster.

#### 5.4.2 ‘The Garden City’

As described above, the most common theme brought up by eleven young people in the interviews, both as an aspect of Christchurch that they really liked and wanted to see more of, was the green space, gardens and the natural environment. This was linked to their own improved wellbeing and mental health by five young people, and spoken about with enthusiasm as being part of what makes Christchurch special for them. A number of youth spontaneously mentioned Christchurch’s label as ‘The Garden City’, and all who brought this up were positive about the label and wanted the city to become more green and ‘full of parks and gardens’.

The environment was discussed positively by eleven youth as a significant part of what they like about the city. Six people talked about loving the gardens and trees, and five people talked about liking the ‘green-ness’ of Christchurch.

Oliver: I love how Christchurch has so many trees and stuff, if you like, lots of cities around don’t have that and it is something we definitely take for granted here in Christchurch.

Van reflected really poignantly on the environment, beauty and spaciousness of Christchurch, and the positive effects that this has on his wellbeing:

Kendall: What is it that you like most about Christchurch?

Van: Mmm..... I like the fact there are trees everywhere. I mean, just vegetation, like, I don't know. You have, if you take NZ as a whole or maybe in Christchurch the population density isn't... isn't too critical. It's not really, it's not compact kinda thing. So, it seems really, kind of spacious.. and I like that. It seems really kind of freeing to me. Cause previously like, for 18 years, I was brought up in a very.. cause it's a very tiny island, Sri Lanka... and you have like 21 million, bordering 22 million now, people. So it's like, jam packed. And it's like, it's bustling. And coming here it was like "ahhh". That hive kind of thing was lifted. And it's more spacious. And breathing space.

Kendall: Why is this important for you?

Van: I think for me personally, I need it. A lot to be honest. Ah like yeah, I go through, for me personally, I go through periods of, not like mania, but maybe depression. Not diagnosed, basically this is me self-diagnosing myself, like I need that kind of, um, like... You need places where man's spirit has not touched the place he is surrounding.

This significance of the natural environment to young people's mental health and wellbeing has also been backed up in other studies of supportive aspects of place for young people post-disaster (Cox et al., 2017). Christchurch is known for its label of the Garden City, and this name arose spontaneously in discussions with seven young people, with all of them either speaking positively about it, or wishing that the city had even more gardens and 'green-ness' to live up to its reputation.

Kendall: What is it that you like most about Christchurch?

Amy: Um I like the gardens. I like the garden city aspect of Christchurch, even though it may not be as.. encouraged as it should be. Um I like that whole concept cause I've got a lot of family connections with gardening and things like that.

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Oliver: Like I feel like we're called the garden city and we've kind of, maybe um, lost a little bit of kind of the actual growth of like.. trees and stuff, around everywhere, but it's coming back. Like I was saying before about the gardens, they're really nice again. Well, they've always been nice, but like, things are actually growing again, because there's like, less chemicals and, liquefaction now. That's a good thing!

Another thing that was mentioned by two young people was how much they enjoyed the variety of outdoor spaces, such as the beach, the hills, and the mountains, and the beauty of the area. In discussing what she liked about Christchurch, Amy mentioned liking the way that the environment has been incorporated into the urban landscape, and made some thoughtful comments about what it is about being a green city that is important to her:

Amy: I love seeing more of a green city, and have rooftop gardens and have green buildings and things like that. That's what I find really exciting.

Kendall: What is it about that stuff that is special to you?

Amy: Um I like focusing on like, environmental factors as well, I've always been very interested in the environment. I love my environmental groups and things like that. So seeing green buildings, I see it as quite hopeful and optimistic for the future and I like that we're planning that far ahead and we're going, there needs to be more green stuff in the city, it's not that the city needs to be a big concrete jungle. And I like seeing the fact that we're trying to reduce our carbon footprint and make it a sustainable city.

The significance of the environment and green space to young people, particularly this generation, has been discussed in the literature (Gearen and Kahle, 2006), and the positive effects of gardens and green spaces on people's overall health and wellbeing have been well-documented (Lee and Maheswaran, 2011). In this study, gardens and green space appear to be a major 'pull-factor' for young people to Christchurch as a place, enabling them to feel a sense of calmness, inclusion and belonging with the beauty of the natural environment around them.

#### **5.4.3 Visions**

Young people were asked what their visions were for Christchurch as a city, and their responses were coded into six major categories. The most common vision was for more spaces and places, activities and things to do in Christchurch, something discussed by eleven young people in the



issues that they saw around the city and a large part of what would make the city feel ‘more exciting and more like home’. The environment was again a key feature of their visions for Christchurch, and eight young people wanted the ‘garden city feel’ of Christchurch to be continued with and to see lots more flowers, trees, green spaces and sustainable buildings around the city (as described in the subsection above). Another key desire expressed was for a ‘world-class public transport system’, discussed by eight young people in the study. Transport, and Christchurch becoming a ‘place-to-be’ (an amalgamation of the themes of vibrant, urban, spaces and activities) will be discussed in greater detail in the following subsections, as visions of the city that would aid in making Christchurch a more desirable, inclusive and youth-friendly place to live. A visualisation of young people’s visions is presented as a word cloud, coded into single words, in Figure 19 below:



Figure 19. Youth visions for Christchurch post-disaster.

#### 5.4.4 Transport

Transport was one major theme brought up by eight young people interviewed, as getting around easily and places being accessible helps to enable a sense of inclusion within a city (White, Wyn and Robards, 2017). This is particularly important for youth who often do not own their own vehicles, as was the case for the majority of young people in the study. Young people wanted

Christchurch to have an 'amazing public transport system' like other cities they had been to overseas, and both buses and cycleways were common topics of conversation.

Three of them talked favourably about the already existing transport around the city, including the bus system and new cycleways that have been built during the regeneration:

Kendall: What about some of the things you like best about Christchurch as a city?

Charlie: Um. I dunno it's quite... like for what people say about the bus service it's quite easy to get around. I find that anyway.

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Kara: I really like now that we have the new cycle way, I find that really exciting, cause I'm getting my bike sent down in a couple of weeks. And like, I wouldn't bike without the cycleway, like I find it really scary on the road.

However, four young people pointed out transport as one of the main issues they saw in Christchurch. Amy talked about how frustrated she and other youth she knows are with both the buses and the cycleways in the city:

Kendall: What issues do young people talk about around here?

Amy: Um, other issues, I think transport's a big one for young people, just cause we can't drive, and we're limited, and you know, then we've gotta bike and that's dangerous and annoying. I get frustrated with the buses a lot, um trying to get between things. Uh having bus schedules run on time especially on the Orbiter, which I take to school, cause I live on the other side of town from my school. So keeping that on time is really annoying. Like you'll see three buses in a row and then you won't have another bus for half an hour even though they're supposed to go every 5-10 minutes, which is great! And then bikeways – they're good, but I can't bike to school cause there's major roads in the way, and parents aren't happy with that. So even though there are cycleways they don't go the whole way, which makes them unusable for people like me, even though I want to bike. So yeah, I think transport's a major one. There's lots of different issues.

While some were happy with public transport in Christchurch, and others were not, a great public transport system was one of the most common visions that eight young people who were interviewed shared for Christchurch as a city. Below are three examples from Kara, Elsie and David:

Kendall: What are your visions for around here and for Christchurch as a city?

Kara: Oh that's a great question. Okay, so like really good transport, that would be my number one. Like I don't, I only drive because I've had a couple bad experiences with buses in high school but that's been enough for me to be like nope! I'm not bussing again.

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Elsie: Well I would like to improve the... if I was mayor of course... I'd make way better public transport systems, because my family went on holiday to Sydney last year, and we didn't get a rental car, we just used public transport to get around, and they had a really good system like to get the underground trains and stuff? It was great. But then in Christchurch you've got the buses and stuff and then you've got, like a tram, that's basically like a... kind of a tour tram. Tourist tour tram! It's... not the best.

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David: [In my visions for Christchurch], public transport is great, like in an ideal situation in the central city like people don't drive because it's all like, everyone just uses public transport or everything cause it's just so efficient.

Because of young people's frequent use of public transport for both financial and environmental reasons, it makes sense that this was one of the top desires of youth who were interviewed for Christchurch as a city. A good public transport system enables greater accessibility to spaces and places and can enhance the sense of inclusion and belonging that people feel in urban environments (Correa-Vallez, Gifford and Barnett, 2010).

#### 5.4.5 A Place to Be

Diana: My vision for Christchurch is that someone who is um you know, not in strife and this is their best option, not just wanting to move somewhere for the heck of it. Not you know being like spontaneous, actually researching and goes, hey! Christchurch NZ looks like a really great place to move to because it's got this that and the other and it's like.. it's not necessarily like, better than where we are living now but it's actually... it's actually like a place to be. Like, I want it to be the place to be. Like, does that make sense?

Thirteen young people interviewed expressed in some form their desire that Christchurch becomes 'a place to be', as described by Diana in the excerpt above. While 'the vibe' of Christchurch being slow and relaxed was talked about positively, young people also talked about the lack of spaces and places in the city, a sense of boredom, and a lack of things to do. They compared Christchurch to other cities and spoke of wishing it was more urban and 'happening'.

Charlie talked about his perception that tourists find Christchurch boring, and wanting Christchurch to become a 'landmark city':

Charlie: I would like Christchurch to become a landmark city. Just, internationally, cause I think when tourists come down it's just a wee stop off point. Like, sometimes I go through and I just end up watching people's travel blogs of New Zealand and I'm just like, why am I doing this? It's 3am, what am I doing?! But they're like, "We're in Christchurch now!" And you see them driving round places that I'm used to and I'm just like wow, in comparison to the rest of the stuff that they've done, Christchurch is really boring... and it's a real shame.

Diana shared a similar sentiment of wanting Christchurch to be a place to be and attract people to it:

Diana: I wanna be reading about Christchurch in the news for good things. I wanna be on a plane to somewhere like Majorca, pick up a magazine that's like "Christchurch NZ! This is what's happening! The best place to be!" Like, I want it to be famous! It should be. We're great. And we're gonna be more great. So lets make that happen. You know, I wanna be here instead of anywhere else.

Kara also discussed this, as well as her concerns about the slow progress that has been made towards it:

Kara: I dunno I think it's gonna be, it is gonna be like a 21st century city.. it's just, we need to get there within the 21st century.

Part of wanting Christchurch to be a 'place to be' is associated with young people's desires for a 'vibrant' and 'urban' city. Five youth talked about the boredom that they feel currently in Christchurch. The lack of spaces and places for young people was a particular concern post-disaster, with five people mentioning this. Included in their desire for more public space were more green spaces, that were easily accessible for people all over the city, and more activities and attractions. Stevie talked about this in depth:

Stevie: [I wish they were] building more stuff right now.

Kendall: Building what kind of stuff?

Stevie: More stuff to do. Like those tourists I was talking to today, they asked “what can I do”? I didn’t really think of that much. Like there’s lots of stuff in nature you can do. But there’s not much you can actually do in the CBD, other than go to the museum, art gallery, or cafes and stuff. There needs to be more attractions. Like no one wants to go ride on the tram for 5 minutes. Well locals don’t. Well I like that the trams working again, but like, there’s other things they should be doing.

Kendall: Do you feel like the central city has places for young people or for you? Places that attract you?

Stevie: Ummm... for my age group. I think obviously I can go out to pubs and stuff. So.. yeah? But I want more. I want more like quirky, hipster places.

Kendall: What do you think for 12 year olds? Would the central city have much to draw them in?

Stevie: No! No way. No! What are they gonna do? They don’t have money to go to cafes and restaurants. They could go to gardens but... there’s nothing for them to do.

Crystal queried whether the things that were currently being built in the central city were only for a certain group of people:

Crystal: But like, the city, that is the place that you’re gonna get the most options, and so they.. there has been buildings popping up like The Crossing, and then they’re gonna have the movie theatre open up, and then they have the criminal justice building, kind of, those places are happening, but then the thing with that is.. is it just for a certain group of people? That those places are gonna exist? So we need, a city, that every group of people can go into that city and find something to do.

Again, this desire for inclusivity for all is a priority for Crystal in the regeneration. Wishing there were more things to do in Christchurch was another significant vision that some youth talked about in the interviews, with eleven young people mentioning this. Wanting more activities and events for young people was part of this, including ones that were out in the suburbs as well as central city.

Kendall: What are your visions for around here and for Christchurch as a city?

Charlie: Stuff to do. Stuff to do.

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Maria: Well....

Brad: Basketball courts everywhere!

Maria: I think just a lot more youth spaces? Cause at the moment the only one I can think of is the Margaret Mahy playground. That's the only thing in the city.

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Diana: Um, they can ah, look up something and put Christchurch in the search bar, and hey presto! It's there. Like, you wanna dance in Christchurch, you wanna climb in Christchurch, you wanna do whatever in Christchurch, activities – it's there!

Having things to do and spaces to hang out in is an important part of belonging, and a lack of communal spaces are common post-disaster. It makes sense that the most commonly expressed vision for young people interviewed in this research was for Christchurch to be a 'place to be', that draws people in with more spaces and places and things to do. This sentiment is also reflected throughout various other surveys that have been conducted with Christchurch young people since the earthquakes (Christchurch Youth Action Plan, 2017; Turning the Tables, 2016)

## 5.5 Discussion

What young people in the study have expressed as challenging and supportive aspects of their city and the regeneration is largely in line with existing literature on place (White, Wyn and Robards, 2017), and place post-disaster (Cox et al., 2017). For instance, on a more local level the Christchurch Youth Action Plan demonstrates the importance young people in the city place on the environment, on improving public transport, and ensuring the city is vibrant, youth-friendly and a place they feel a part of (2017). The Turning the Tables report puts 'the state of the rebuild' and 'youth friendly spaces and places' in the top five of youth issues, as selected by over 250 Christchurch young people (2015). Other academic literature, including Neville's (2016) thesis on the stigma young people from East Christchurch experience of their neighbourhoods, and Tanner's thesis (2014) on youth's emotional geographies of Kaiapoi post-earthquakes reinforces the exclusion some young people feel and their need for a sense of belonging and attachment to place in the city.

Unlike the previous chapter on youth perspectives on decision-making, where young people were relatively unanimous in their expressions of exclusion from local politics and their struggle to participate in the city post-disaster, this chapter shows that young people have quite different levels of place attachment to Christchurch. This was reflected in their responses to questions, with some describing feeling 'out of place' in Christchurch and others feeling included and at home, some still optimistic about the rebuild, and others very disillusioned. This array of perspectives on the city and regeneration shows that young people's voices do not necessarily fit in one cohesive box, and there are factors that have differing levels of importance for young people's attachment to place in Christchurch. It appeared, for example, that the four young people who were not interested in decision-making and had not participated in youth participation groups in Christchurch were more optimistic about the rebuild, reported feeling more attached to their neighbourhoods, and were less critical of the city overall.

Whether youth in the study would 'stay or leave' also became an interesting tension, likely reflecting the different levels of place attachment these young people had, among other factors (Scannell, Cox, Fletcher & Heykoop, 2016). Around one third expressed they would definitely stay, the majority of which had lived in Christchurch their entire lives and reported particularly close family, friends and social networks in the city. Others appeared to be more open, or even determined, to leave Christchurch, due to the city not meeting their needs for employment and feelings of belonging. However, while there was some disparity between youth levels of optimism, sense of connection to place, and desires to stay or leave, there were still many similarities in the issues they perceived and their visions for Christchurch as it recovers post-disaster.

The findings in this chapter have implications for the Christchurch recovery, in showing that the way the city is being regenerated may not be meeting the hopes of many of these young people – perhaps a consequence of not having meaningful youth participation and community engagement post-disaster. Young people in this study, whether 'young leaders' or not expressed a high desire for fairness, justice and equality in the city post-disaster that they did not believe were being met. This unfairness was discussed as part of the challenging aspects of Christchurch and the regeneration they identified, with the geographic divisions and stigma, youth exclusion from central city spaces, and growing homelessness rates key concerns for them that impacted their

wellbeing and recovery. The supportive aspects of place young people in the study described, particularly the natural environment, an improved public transport system, and an increase in youth-friendly spaces and places were aspects of the city that youth wanted to be prioritised more than they were being currently. Overall this chapter has further demonstrated the importance of youth voices being actively considered by Christchurch decision-makers post-disaster, with their participation crucial to the creation of a city that meets the needs of the community, fosters and supports their wellbeing, inclusion and sense of belonging.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed young people's perspectives on place in Christchurch post-earthquakes. It has examined the way that young people describe Christchurch as a city and the regeneration that it is undergoing post-disaster. Youth talked about aspects of place that were particularly challenging for their recovery and wellbeing, namely the geographic divisions between and within suburbs, neglect and stigma of certain areas in Christchurch, the modern vs historic divide in people's ideas for the regeneration, and young people's exclusion from spaces in central city due to their age or lack of disposable income. Housing and homelessness were discussed as other key challenges in the city that were especially concerning for the youth in the study. Overall, the above challenges led young people to question their place in Christchurch and whether they would stay or leave, with those who felt more included, connected to people, and attached to place wanting to stay, and those who felt more excluded, disconnected from people and unable to find desirable employment wanting to leave.

Supportive aspects of the city and regeneration for young people's wellbeing and recovery included the natural environment, with the trees, green spaces, and 'Garden City' reputation of Christchurch discussed as being especially meaningful and significant for youth. Young people's favourite aspects of the city and their visions for the future were outlined. Key visions of Christchurch included the city having a world-class transport system to enable easy mobility, and becoming a 'place to be' with lots of youth-friendly spaces, activities, and vibrancy that attracts people to live there and visit.



The central themes of inclusion and exclusion were clear throughout youth's perspectives on place. The aspects of Christchurch that they spoke fondly of, such as the gardens and green spaces, and new 'quirky' buildings that were opening up within central city and the energy this added to the space, contributed to their feelings of inclusion, wellbeing and belonging to the city. Conversely, the bubbles and divisions they perceived around them, including between and within suburbs, in the neglect and stigmatisation of certain suburbs, and in the 'shutting out' of young people from spaces in central city due to their age and lack of money, contributed to their feelings of exclusion from Christchurch. Feeling excluded from the place that one lives in, particularly post-disaster, has been shown in the literature to affect the wellbeing of young people by reducing their sense of belonging and place attachment, two such important supportive aspects in their recovery. The following chapter continues to discuss young people's sense of inclusion and exclusion in Christchurch post-disaster, this time focusing on their perspectives on people and the community.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Youth Perspectives on People and Community

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*Kendall: What is it that you guys like about Christchurch, or your communities?*

*James: I guess the most positive thing through the work that we've done, I think I've got really close friends that are well respected in the community and also just generally, and I know like if I ever had anything, I was going through a difficult time, or just feeling down, I could talk to them about whatever's going on for me. Um and.. yeah, I think that's more what keeps me in Christchurch.*

*Kendall: The people?*

*James: (Nodding) Yeah.*

*Maria: Yeah, that's true.*

*James: Not that there's anything that's drawing me somewhere else, I just mean that's what it's about, what makes this place home or makes this place feel warm for me.*

*Kendall: Mm. Similar for you guys?*

*Maria: (Nodding) Definitely the people, definitely the people.*

### 6.1 Introduction

The social or communal aspect of a city or neighbourhood is a central part of place-making for young people (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2015). The importance of community was spontaneously brought up by all young people when they were asked to reflect upon place and politics in Christchurch during the interviews for this research. Whether they were asked questions about their city, their neighbourhood, the regeneration, or about decision-making, youth continually brought their answers back to the importance of the community and of people.

This chapter examines four key themes that emerged from the interview and focus group discussions with young people, concerning their reflections on the community in Christchurch post-disaster:

- 6.2 The ***regeneration of people***, discussing youth desires for the regeneration to place Christchurch people at the heart of recovery efforts
- 6.3 The ***wellbeing*** of people in the city, particularly concerning young people's mental health post-disaster and the perceived lack of resources and support surrounding this
- 6.4 The ***social divisions*** young people perceived in Christchurch, including because of age, culture or ethnicity, and class and the stereotypes and stigma that may emerge surrounding these
- 6.5 The value of ***community and culture***, discussing young people's desires for a greater sense of community, to know their neighbours, and a city that is diverse and proudly multicultural

This chapter centres around the desire expressed by young people in the study to feel like they *belong* in Christchurch post-disaster, and their experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the community and their visions for the future.

## 6.2 The Regeneration of People

The regeneration of Christchurch post-disaster was discussed extensively by youth in the interviews, and the importance was repeatedly shifted from buildings and infrastructure to people. Ten young people in the study reported that they saw the rebuild as a “chance” for the people of Christchurch and their wellbeing to be prioritised, or as an “opportunity” to create a truly people-centred city that Christchurch people could come together and have a say in.

Six youth also talked about the regeneration meaning “people” and “participation” to them. Here Van deliberates over the meaning that the regeneration has to him, and shifts the emphasis from the regeneration being about infrastructure to also being about people:

Van: [It] seems like Christchurch is rising back from the ashes, kind of thing. I don't know if that's too morbid a metaphor. I would, I mean, for me, for any regeneration initiatives I've come across it has mostly to do with infrastructure. And does it? Is it infrastructure based? Or, cause I'm not, really..

Kendall: It's up to you and how you want to think about regeneration. What should it be about?

Van: I think, regeneration should be equivalent with resilience... buildings can matter to people. They are like, they can be monuments that bring people together and create community. And that's important. Um, but, regeneration can also mean like regeneration of people's hope, or say feelings of like, say, safety within the city. You know?

The multiple meanings to regeneration and Van's description of the regeneration being about people's resilience, sense of safety and hope was reiterated by Fluffy, who spoke passionately about the significance that was often put on business and buildings when she wished more focus was placed on people and their wellbeing:

Kendall: What issues or problems do you think other people think about around here?

Fluffy: I think a lot of people talk about businesses, and economic wise, and the rebuild and stuff, and I understand that that's important but that's not something that makes me be like, yes! You should fix that. I'm just like, nah let's fix how sad people feel first. Like, yeah.

Kendall: So for you it's more about...

Fluffy: The people of Christchurch, rather than what Christchurch looks like and how nice the buildings are.

Prioritising the people and their wellbeing was also a theme that emerged in Chapter Four on Decision-Making and Chapter Five on Christchurch. Oliver lost a family friend in the earthquakes, and the meaning of the regeneration for him was to honour the memory of those who had passed away:

Oliver: The vision for Christchurch is to really take hold of the opportunity that the earthquake has brought us. Like I lost a family friend in the earthquake and I feel like for everyone that knows or you know has a relative that passed in the earthquake, it's only fitting that like Christchurch is made into... 100% full throttle the

opportunity that it, you know, has, especially in homage to the people that we've lost. It means, ah, building a city that would make the people that lost their lives in the earthquake proud.

In summary, it was striking that so many young people said they wanted people to be at the centre of regeneration efforts, and in their discussion they placed emphasis on words like “hope”, “resilience”, “wellbeing”, and “honouring” the memories of those who lost their lives in the earthquakes. While this may be responding to social norms and expectations, it is noteworthy that these values were often repeated. Despite this emphasis that they wanted placed on people post-disaster, however, youth interviewed were divided over whether they felt that this opportunity to focus on wellbeing and the community was being met in Christchurch during the recovery period. This will be discussed in the following subsections on wellbeing and the community and culture.

## 6.3 Wellbeing

In many ways many of the themes that will be discussed in this chapter, and those discussed in the previous chapters, come back to the desire expressed by young people that the people of Christchurch and their wellbeing should be the top priority, and are of particular concern post-earthquakes. Ten youth in this study identified mental health as a key issue and challenge experienced by young people in Christchurch, and those interviewed shared their own personal stories of struggle as well as those of people close to them.

Kendall: What are the biggest challenges for young people in Christchurch?

Brad: I'd say for young people, it's a lot around mental health.

James: Mm. Cause under 14 year olds are the highest waiting group for mental health in Christchurch.

The above excerpt shows Brad and James identifying mental health as one of the key challenges youth are experiencing in the city post-earthquakes. Fluffy was also concerned about this, and spoke of a deficit in funding, resources and services for mental health in the city:

Fluffy: I think, our mental health resources need to be better. As someone that's struggled with it, and has a flatmate that's really struggled with it, and studies health as well.. yeah. I don't think.. I understand, studying

health, I understand it's just because we don't have enough funding. So I understand that nothing can happen because we don't have the money for it but there is a lot that needs to be fixed in terms of mental health. Our services are not up for it at all.

This emphasis on wellbeing and mental health is reflected in the literature on young people post-disaster and has been covered much in the national media concerning the Christchurch regeneration (McDonald, 2018d). High levels of stress and pressure from school and study was also discussed by two participants, as were a lack of social connections, and these were related back as a reason why many young people in Christchurch are struggling with their mental health. Loneliness has also recently been discussed in the media as more of an issue for NZ youth aged between 15-24 than for adults and the elderly (Kidson, 2018).

Stevie works as a youth mental health worker in communities around Christchurch, and was particularly passionate about young people not being put under pressure at school from adults' expectations of them to achieve highly:

Stevie: I think expectations to achieve high and to do certain jobs or career paths that.. like, I think, we shouldn't be putting such high expectations on our young people. We should be giving them space to grow and learn about themselves. And have fun. Like just have fun! Why so serious? Stop it! You're giving them anxiety and depression. And there's not enough funding and resources for them when they do have – when they can't handle it. Well good luck detecting it, and good luck working with it. Cause, there's not enough.

Kendall: That's interesting that the young people you work with still feel crippled by expectations?

Stevie: Most of them do. Most of them with anxiety it's because they, they're expecting so much from themselves, or someone else is. Because that's what society tells them that they have to be, or who they have to be. And same with depression. When they give up, and they feel like they can't meet it, then they're getting depressed or some of these kids are having really scary experiences with psychosis and stuff like that.

Having positive mental health is an important part of wellbeing and helps people to connect with others and feel that they belong. Those who struggle with mental health often face stigma and are more likely to feel excluded from their community and the people around them (Sayce, 2000). Not only this, but ensuring that everyone has their basic needs met was talked about as an aspiration by eight participants and a major part of their vision for Christchurch. Aspects discussed here

included good health and mental health, a clean environment, equality of opportunities, gender equality, quality of housing, and less crime. The following is a discussion had between twelve year old's Mrs Norris and Elsie that covers many of these aspirations:

Kendall: What is it that you want for the people of Christchurch?

Elsie: I'd want that no one had to.. I think everyone should have their basic needs, and stuff. Cause, yeah, I'm pretty sure that we have like food and warm clothes and.. this sounds really really bad but you know you see those ads on tv where they're all sad and they don't have shoes and stuff, that sounds really really rich spoilt brat, but I'm not trying to be rich spoilt brat I'm just saying.

Kendall: You want them to have that stuff?

Elsie: Yeah and everyone should have the same opportunities.

Mrs Norris: For the person that don't have any money?

Elsie: Yeah. Or the person in general.

Mrs Norris: (Nodding). Okay. Same thing as Elsie.

The desire that youth expressed for the people of Christchurch to have their health and wellbeing prioritised post-disaster, so that everyone can connect and thrive, further reinforces the value that young people in the study placed on their communities and on people being put first. The following section addresses one of the other main challenges for young people in Christchurch, the social divisions between generations that leads to stereotyping and feelings of exclusion.

## 6.4 Social Divisions between Generations

While young people spoke of their desire to have people placed at the centre of regeneration efforts in Christchurch and for their wellbeing and mental health to be prioritised, the other central theme to emerge from the interviews were their observations of social exclusion in the city. As well as their experiences of physical exclusion, as discussed in Chapter Five, and their political exclusion, as discussed in Chapter Four, youth talked extensively about the divisions or 'bubbles' that they

saw between people due to a number of different factors, but namely because of age, and this was a challenging aspect of young people's wellbeing and recovery in Christchurch. When asked about the challenges that they think young people face specifically in Christchurch, the most common response was about their struggle for acceptance and belonging in the city, due to these social divisions and stereotyping, as mentioned by nine young people.

Five young people described not feeling accepted in Christchurch because of their age. They talked about the stereotypes and prejudice that they face in the city as young people, not feeling part of a community, and not being seen as adults' equal. Diana talked about the lack of acceptance she feels in the area where she lives, and her perception of the suburb she lives in as a place for older people rather than young people:

Kendall: What are the issues or problems that you see around here?

Diana: Like around here? So... with this community... um... I feel mostly accepted at uni, but not round here. Like... this is most definitely not... it's a place with a concentration of young people, it's not a place for young people. It's so weird. Like just outside of uni, you've got um... you know family suburbs that like you know you walk through them and you look like me you're gonna get a look. You know, like, it's kind of, it's not a place that's, um.. made for everyone. It's most definitely, kind of elitist and prejudiced, in many ways.

Kendall: So you don't necessarily feel accepted, as a young person?

Diana: As a young person? No. No. Even just as a young person, no, once I think about it. Which is weird.

Kendall: So who is this area made for then?

Diana: Ah... by observation, older people! (Laughs). Like literally either people who are kind of like, 50s, 60s or like, young families. And you know, it's made for those kinds of, American dream kinda people. And it's true. Don't know why but it's true.

Kendall: So one of the problems that you see then is a lack of acceptance of young people in this area?

Diana: Yes. Yeah.



Stereotypes of young people were a major theme brought up in the interviews, and Ray talked about his personal experience of this:

Kendall: What are the issues or problems that you see around here?

Ray: It's a lot about.. stereotypes by older people about youth. And that's the same with Christchurch as well, it's that, especially people my age, like when I first started school, even just by my teachers I was stereotyped as someone who is a loud, noisy little "typical" thirteen year old, typical teen.

Oliver also discussed the stigma and stereotypes of adolescents and young adults, particularly in regard to youth being distrusted by adults or considered 'bad' simply because of their age:

Kendall: What are the issues or problems that you see around here?

Oliver: Mmhmm. Umm, there is generally a lot of bad stereotypes that youth face. Especially, I remember seeing a stuff article about the ragtag youth around Division Street, that kind of struck a nerve... I feel like Prebbleton is one of those towns where youth are kind of all seen as rag tag, oh, get off my front lawn type. There's definitely a left skew within Prebbleton and I don't know if that kind of offsets and the older generations have that kind of character perception of youth but, there's definitely a bit of that.

This view of youth with mistrust by adults has also been described in the literature (White, Wyn & Robards, 2017) and Crystal also pointed out this issue of youth in Christchurch being judged negatively by adults and stereotyped:

Kendall: That's interesting. So you're kind of saying that you feel like youth are sort of mistrusted in Christchurch? Is that right?

Crystal: (Nods). Sometimes. It's kind of... cause it is, like, we do have a lot of the older population.. who... sometimes are really having bad experiences. That is valid, but it doesn't mean every young person that they meet is that person that is gonna attack them, or do something wrong.

Within the subtheme of belonging, five young people talked about the difficulties of finding their voice and their place in Christchurch. Two young people felt that Christchurch was a city 'for other people', and again, issues of reputation and prejudice were talked about as reasons youth feel they

do not fit in. Here Van discusses the challenge he faces personally of feeling like he does not belong in Christchurch:

Kendall: What are the biggest challenges that you see yourself facing in Christchurch?

Van: Mm.. a challenge for me personally is like, maybe feel... actually being part of a community. Cause like, we toss these words round like oh community, you know, I dunno what else, brotherhood, people that come together or what have you, but it's like actually being part of a community that's like a challenge. Cause, um... I don't know it's.. I sometimes feel like I'm not really part of what you would call the community of Christchurch... Or maybe, having the need to feel accepted by the people here? I don't know, maybe that's a challenge for me. Um, yeah. It's bit of an acceptance thing. That's the wrong word, maybe not acceptance but like, fitting into the mould? I don't know.

Kendall: Like belonging?

Van: Belonging. That's a better word. Belonging. And that has become easier as time has gone by. It was extremely hard the first few months, it was fucking horrible. It was absolutely fucking horrible. Um as in for me, cause I was very isolated. And I still feel that way sometimes. I dunno, for me that's a challenge. Like... feeling like one in a million and being separate from the rest of the 999,999.

Belonging again arises as a key aspiration of young people, and a key challenge for them and others in Christchurch. Kara also talked about how youth in Christchurch struggle to find their place in the city due to their age:

Kendall: What are the biggest challenges for youth in Christchurch?

Kara: Probably just generally like knowing their place in the city. Like it's not, it will feel like a city for older people. I probably feel a bit better and it's more my place because I'm 21, you know, I'm a bit older, but if you're young coming into the central city, what is there for you? There just doesn't seem to be anything for young people. Um and there's no emphasis on them, yeah I think that's huge. And probably just the stereotypes as well, you always get it and you hear about it through work, it's like "oh we don't want the young people hanging out here, or this building here", or x y z.

James also spoke of how common it was for young people that he spoke to in Christchurch to feel like they did not belong in the city. He shared an interesting way youth he knew had talked of testing this:

James: Like I know, one young person PYLAT talked to in the past said that, um actually more than one, a number have said that Ballantynes is a place that they'll never feel comfortable. And that kind of for me is the test of whether you feel like you belong in Christchurch or not. Yeah cause that's the stoic institution.

In summary, divisions between young people and older people concerned a lack of acceptance, negative stereotypes, and youth struggling to feel like they belonged. 'Belonging' was also recognised as a key aspiration of young people in the city in the Christchurch Youth Action Plan (2017) and is a theme that has been referred to repeatedly in this study throughout the presentation on findings. The following section on community and culture continues the narrative that young people in this research desire to feel more included with the Christchurch community, discussing their aspirations for a greater sense of community and a more multicultural, diverse and accepting city post-disaster.

## 6.5 Community and Culture

As part of their desire for inclusion within Christchurch, a central theme that emerged from discussions with young people in this study was an often-repeated desire for "acceptance" and "belonging", this was also expressed as wanting to feel "a sense of community" and the importance of "connections." Eight youth spoke positively about the good qualities of people in Christchurch and their connections with friends and family as being one of their favourite parts of living in the city. While five of those interviewed reported that they already felt that they had a strong sense of community in their neighbourhood, a significant issue raised by many young people was concern about feeling excluded from their own community and social groups, as described above. This section will outline young people's desires to feel a greater sense of community, to know their neighbours, and to have a city that encourages diversity and promotes multiculturalism.

### 6.5.1 Sense of Community

In discussions of what they liked most about Christchurch, ‘the people’ or ‘the community’ was the most common response, with ten youth mentioning words to this effect without prompting. The “sense of community” they felt was discussed as a really positive thing about Christchurch by five young people, with these youth talking about knowing their neighbours, admiring the resilience of their communities, feeling at home and feeling secure. Four young people talked about how the sense of community in Christchurch has improved after the earthquakes:

Stevie: ...Actually you know what? I think since before the earthquake there’s a way better sense of community with people. Christchurch people, we talk to each other more. I think before, people didn’t know their neighbours as much... or like, care to. Because why? Everyone was a lot more individual. I think now that it’s happened people will realise that we all need to be connected. Not just for like safety, but for support, for supporting our mental health. You know if something happens, it’s good to have your neighbours there. I think only good things have happened since the earthquake. I don’t think Christchurch is worse off. It’s just changed.

David also believed that feelings of community had improved after the earthquakes, and he tied this increased sense of community in with the resilience of Christchurch people post-disaster:

David: Yeah, um I think that community is, um.... I think there is like a sense of community more so after like the earthquakes, cos a lot of the people who live, especially in the area that I lived in, were in like state houses and they weren’t able, like they haven’t actually ever left Christchurch. They might’ve been displaced from other parts of the city but they never kind of like left Christchurch per se, so there’s a strong sense of resilience amongst the people.

Two other people mentioned how much they liked the resilience of the community in Christchurch, the ways that people had banded together post-disaster to support one another, including the unique initiatives like Gapfiller that were started post-earthquakes to help people and the city recover (Reynolds, 2014).

Elsie: I like the student volunteer army idea! I like that he had an idea and put it on social media and then everyone started helping, I think that’s really nice. Also like I said before all the stuff they’re trying to do to just make it a little bit happier and better, like Gapfiller and stuff.

Kendall: Do you feel like Gapfiller is bringing the community together?

Elsie: Yeah definitely!

The above quotations drawn from the interviews paint a positive picture of the sense of community in Christchurch post-earthquakes, showing some young people's admiration of their communities' ability to come together during the earthquakes and recovery period. Despite this, not everyone agreed that they felt a strong sense of community in the city. Seven young people who were interviewed spontaneously brought up their feelings of exclusion from the community and their own neighbourhoods, and a desire for this to change. Ray talked about wishing that there was more of a sense of community in his neighbourhood that existed outside of his school environment:

Ray: Um, I think that there's not enough of this – and this is the same in Kaiapoi with the small friend groups – like, you might be very, very close to a small group of friends like I am, but I feel like there needs to be more of a sense of community that isn't just 'school'? Like, just everywhere there could be so many more opportunities for community events, from events to get people that don't usually go out to events going and meeting people in their community... like, I feel like a sense of community is what communities are for, and it's all good and well having a small group – that you call a community – with a small group of friends, but ah, to me I feel like Burnside – and I feel like this is something that the school could do, or the community board, or something like that, is run more events that promote youth getting together, promoting different age groups getting together to meet with people that they can relate to...

Kendall: You feel like, although you have a sense of community with your friend group at school you want to widen that out and meet other people and bring people together in the community?

Ray: Yeah. Yeah.

Charlie also talked about how he did not feel a sense of community in Christchurch, and while at first he did not think this was an issue for himself personally, he saw that this could be particularly problematic for the elderly people in his neighbourhood who often lived alone and seemed quite isolated:

Kendall: What about, in your communities, do you feel a sense of community or do you know your neighbours?

Charlie: No. no. not really. Um, yeah I dunno, I don't think we've ever really known our neighbours too well, I think lately there has been talk in new Zealand of like, we're not connecting with out neighbours enough... If we had, yeah, if we build sort of a more interconnected sense of community. Getting more people out of their houses and out to, doing stuff. I think that would be a big challenge. I think we could work towards that.

While the desire for a sense of community in Christchurch was unanimous, more youth reported feeling like they were excluded from their neighbourhood and social groups in Christchurch than reported feeling included. As a pattern that emerged with these responses, gender and age differences were most apparent, with younger participants (12-18) and females more often saying that they felt a sense of community than older and male youth.

#### ***6.5.1.1 Knowing their Neighbours***

Whether young people knew their neighbours or not was something brought up spontaneously by four young people that were interviewed. More people did not know their neighbours than did, and Amy was one of the few young people who spoke really positively about her connections with neighbours on her family's street:

Kendall: Do you know your neighbours?

Amy: Yeah definitely. I've always been brought up to know my neighbours and they're quite close to me. There'd be neighbours of mine which are closer to me than aunts and uncles, and.. that's quite important in the community. I'm always, like comfortable walking down the road, and always comfortable saying hi, and helping them and things like that. So I definitely find the community vibe good in the area.

The only other young person who spoke as enthusiastically about her connections with people on her street was Stevie, a 24-year old woman from New Brighton:

Stevie: I live in New Brighton. In a really family friendly street, and I really love it there. It feels really safe and everyone is really friendly and open. And you can just walk around and everyone smiles at you and talks to you and says hello. And it's like that in all of New Brighton. It's like really quirky different people there, and it's

got a really strong community feel that I don't think.. that's there in other parts of Christchurch. I think New Brighton's quite unique? And special.

Stevie links her experiences of knowing her neighbours to the particular suburb that she lives in, and Amy also spoke of the uniqueness of her street in Christchurch for being particularly connected and friendly. This positive discussion about knowing their neighbours was otherwise rare in interviews, with many young people living in neighbourhoods where they felt it was more difficult to connect with the people around them. Van brought up his discomfort that people in Christchurch often do not know their neighbours:

Van: I feel that... do you know, for example. Do you know who your neighbours are?

Kendall: No.

Van: See for me that's an issue. I don't like... I've had this. I mean it's not just to Christchurch obviously it can happen anywhere in the fucking world. To me, that's.. it bugs me! That, you don't know who lives like a wall away from you.

Kara's discussion around her community mirrored this sense of frustration that people did not know their neighbours, and she spoke of the effects that this may have on people:

Kara: But I... I also think not everyone really knows each other. Like we don't know our neighbours and stuff like that, like it's quite disengaged. It's not really a neighbourhood, you just live there and I wonder if that's because of the whole flatting type thing? No one has firm roots but... yeah.

Kendall: What are the effects of that?

Kara: Mmm. So like we had an issue with our landlord, oh not our landlord our property manager a while ago, and um, we actually knew that he apparently owns the next two houses next to us. Anyway, it was definitely illegal what he did but we didn't feel comfortable going to talk to the other neighbours and finding out what happened with them. And I think maybe if we had, like everyone could have sort of banded together and we all would have had a better outcome. So that was something really direct. Other than that like the kids next door will kick their ball over the fence accidentally, and feel too scared to come over, so we like throw it back, um.. but yeah, just because you're too scared.

Van linked not knowing neighbours to a sense of mistrust that people have of each other, particularly of young people:

Van: But from what I've noticed, it's very... I dunno if it's the older generation, but it's like... people are suspicious of each other. Like they always try to uh look at the bad they might do to you, as opposed to the good you can have.

This discussion that Van had on mistrust, as well as the overarching desire that these young people had to know their neighbours, has also been recognised in the literature on young people and neighbourhoods (Hawkins & Maurer, 2011; White, Wyn and Robards, 2017).

### ***6.5.2 Diversity and Multiculturalism***

Oliver: I [want to] always strive every day to be truly involved in multiculturalism, ah, truly being woke to all the different ethnicities, races, types of people out there and all the different cultures that Christchurch is because we definitely are a cauldron of culture.

The importance of diversity and multiculturalism was also clearly strong for many youth interviewed in the study, with nine of eighteen young people bringing this up spontaneously in discussion of issues that they saw in Christchurch and/or as part of their visions for the city and its people, to become “truly multicultural” or “accepting of all ethnicities”. Topics that were covered included young people’s experiences of racism and discrimination in the city, the lack of knowledge people had about different cultures and New Zealand’s history, the lack of awareness of all the different cultures in Christchurch, cultural groups that may not be connecting with one another, and cultures in the city often being “lumped together and labelled” when people may not all share the same values and ideas. These discussions are summarised below.

#### **Perceptions**

The perception of Christchurch as a ‘white city’ was mentioned by three young people in the interviews, and they wanted Christchurch to recognise itself as a multicultural city and part of Polynesia. Kara spoke of Christchurch’s perception as ‘white’:



Kara: But yeah we're still just a bit too 'old, white Christchurch'. And I actually have friends from other cities who are like don't you have all those Neo-Nazi's in Christchurch? And I'm like, no not for years! Don't think that about us! But obviously it is still a perception. Um, so.. I think we need to do more in that space a lot.

Roman also reflected on the 'whiteness' of Christchurch and how he felt as a Pacifica person when he first moved to the city:

Roman: When I first came here I thought it was very, I don't wanna use the word, but white. It's like quite a white race down here, that's dominant. And coming from Wellington or like Porirua, where the Pacific community is bigger... um, yeah.

Kendall: What did you think of Christchurch when you arrived? Did you like it? Did it take you a while to settle in?

Roman: Yeah it took me, probably a good 3 months till I started to feel like, oh this is okay. I can handle it. Cause I used to walk down the street in Redwood and I'd say hi to people and they wouldn't say hi back. So like, okay, sweet, I'll keep to myself.

Kendall: Yeah and that's quite a weird thing probably?

Roman: Yeah you say sup, and then if they don't say sup back it's like ahh okay... alright....

Not only did Roman perceive Christchurch as a predominantly white city, but he noticed a lack of friendliness from people and difference in the way he was treated compared to his old community in Wellington.

### **Multiculturalism as lived reality**

This perception of Christchurch as 'white' was challenged by four young people in the interviews, who saw it as a major issue that Christchurch does not recognise the cultural diversity present in the city, or seem aware of itself as a city in Polynesia. James reflected on multiculturalism within Christchurch:

Kendall: What are the issues or problems that you see around here?

James: One of the main ones I think is that Christchurch is still working out what it means to be a multicultural city. What it means to do biculturalism at all, let alone well. And then, what it means to be a city in Polynesia. I don't think it, I mean we have the multicultural strategy, and that's young, only a year old, but, you know that kind of thing. [There are] still some really entrenched people who lead Christchurch, like generations of people that lead Christchurch.

Maria also agreed with James' observation, sharing how she did not see that people in Christchurch recognised the diversity of cultures within the city:

Maria: Um, just touching on what James said, I don't think most people in Christchurch aren't aware that it is a multicultural city. Like there's different cultures here. That's kind of like the same thing at my school... Um so I don't think people know how to respond or accept in a good way the fact that it is a multicultural city with quite different cultures within Christchurch...

As an example of this, James talked about the way that marketing campaigns in Christchurch did not reflect the diversity of people and ethnicities:

And then the airport, their marketing campaigns have never really reflected the diversity we have here. They always will focus on Pakeha to speak about our region. No Asian, no Pacific, no Maori. It's kinda like, no wait but we have so much more that's going on here!

This failure to recognise the already existing diversity and multicultural nature of Christchurch has also been addressed in the Christchurch Youth Action Plan (2017), and embracing diversity appears to be a major aspiration of young students in New Zealand (Nissen, 2017).

## Discrimination

Experiences of racism, cultural bias, and discrimination were discussed by four youth, and in particular by young people in the youth participation focus group. James spoke of two examples of racism that he and others had noted on a Christchurch-wide level:

Kendall: Like there's a lot of bias that goes on? And open discrimination?

James: Yeah definitely. I've heard someone say in our wider group, Auckland had 'I am Auckland', that campaign around subconscious bias, and Christchurch there's still full on racism. There was a couple there the year before, the white pride march after the diversity thing, and like the patrolling in New Brighton. Way less frequent now, but still happening.

As well as these broader examples of racism in Christchurch, two youth discussed personal stories of when they felt they were discriminated against for their ethnicity and culture:

James: We had someone come over one time and tell us we were planting the wrong grass seeds and we had to clear everything. And they said, "Oh well, as Pacific people, you're a bit like Africans back in South Africa. And you know, it's all about survival for you. You can't take the African out of the bush, the African will always be in the bush, you're not really into beauty and things it's more about survival and I guess it's the same with Pacific people". And we're just like, yeah ok... Yeah.

Maria talked about the low expectations she had experienced as a Pacifica woman in high school:

Maria: My school was like, my school was really white, and then when I got good grades in school, the school was kind of shocked that I was getting good grades. And I was really offended by that! I was like what the heck. Um, and then.. that pressure was put on me to kind of lift all the other Islanders within the group because, "hey this girl is doing really great! She's non-white, so... you know, we'll try and push her to do better". So that kind of pissed me off. I think that was probably the closest thing that's ever been thrown in my face to do with race.

Kendall: You felt like they had low expectations of you?

Maria: Exactly.

These experiences of racism and discrimination further lead to young people's sense of exclusion from their city and communities (Wodak, 2008).

### **Cultural understanding**

Some young people spoke of the lack of understanding they felt that people in Christchurch had of different cultures. A good example of this is shown in the conversation with Fluffy:

Kendall: What are the issues or problems that you see around here?

Fluffy: Um... I think that even though Christchurch tries to bring a lot of like cultural awareness I feel like there's a massive, not so much... there's like.. awareness going on about it but I feel like there's a lot of lack of understanding about it. I feel like you're trying to bring up the culture but not fully understanding it before you're putting it out there.

Fluffy continued on to discuss how this lack of understanding can result in people grouping ethnicities and their perceived values into the same box, when this is often not the case:

Fluffy: Especially when people like um.. Pacifica people have low accessibility due to language and culture differences, but then they always lump pacific people into one culture, that's not very true. Cause I'm from a Fijian background and I know that's different from like a Niuean background or a Samoan background or Tongan background. And so even though I feel like there's a lot, like positive information being taught to people about cultural difficulties and barriers and stuff, we're not all like... we are all Pacifica, but you can't just lump us and say this is our core value, cause we all have our own values.

This lack of understanding of cultures that Fluffy was discussing was mirrored in the youth participation focus group. The four young people talked about the way that the history of New Zealand and the relationship between NZ and the Pacific Islands are often ignored and misrepresented, and that this lack of understanding creates a lack of empathy from people towards different cultures, resulting in negative stereotypes and stigmas that are unjust:

Maria: So I think if we were taught just a deeper you know understanding of our history then.. cause I think the only thing we get taught was the Treaty of Waitangi.

James: And that's even, that's inconsistent.

Maria: Exactly, that's true.

James: Cause the other thing is I think it actually changes your empathy, like if you know about the Treaty of Friendship, you know about New Zealand's colonial administration in Samoa, and then you're like, actually wait – there is a reason why equity happens without a visa policy and these other things. And also the fact that pacific people have been brought into fill labour shortages and all this other stuff, whereas there's often

like “Oh here come the pacific people” or like, “Negative stealing our jobs, our livelihoods, our homes, da da da” but there’s actually you know, New Zealand has to be a bit grateful! New Zealand’s need was met by the Pacific and that’s part, that’s why, people are here now.

Kendall: Mm, so we actually leave out 99% of our history..?

Brad: And it’s fucking disgusting, excuse my language, but it creates this negative stigma. I remember this girl said, “I don’t think Pacifica deserve scholarships”. I just wanted to go aghhhhhhh! But if there was like an awareness around it cause we were taught about it, there’d be more understanding, and there’d be less Pacific people I guess being hurt by these things.

James: Cause it’s hard enough just to accept the help, let alone get discriminated for getting the help.

Kendall: Because people don’t understand the history, the context behind that?

James: Yeah and we need to remedy those things, that’s needed to get to equality of a small kind, cause it’s not full equality. But then that can hopefully decrease and then... positive future. Hopefully.

Ultimately this discussion of community, connections, diversity and belonging shows that while some young people have a strong sense of connection to the people around them and feelings of inclusion in their neighbourhoods and city, other young people find this more difficult, perhaps due to a number of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and where they live in Christchurch. These discussions may have happened in the community irrespective of the earthquakes, but in conversation some young people linked diversity to strong communities. Interestingly, this has also been noted in the city’s Multicultural Strategy (Christchurch City Council, 2017), although again three young people in the study pointed out that this Strategy was not as impactful as they had hoped it would be. Moreover, all young people in this research appeared to be united over their desire for inclusion. They recognised the importance of feeling a sense of community, knowing their neighbours, recognising diversity in Christchurch, acknowledging multiculturalism, and shared an overall aspiration for everyone to feel accepted and like they belong in the city. The following section discusses the findings presented in this chapter in further detail.

## 6.6 Discussion

The aspiration that young people expressed in this study for the people of Christchurch to be prioritised has been voiced often since the earthquakes (McCrone, 2018) and also reflected as a crucial aspect of recovery in the post-disaster literature (Peek, 2008). However, young people's unhappiness of the level of consideration given to the people of Christchurch after the earthquakes and currently, shows again how the 'inclusive recovery' rhetoric may not be translating to reality, with youth expressing frustration at their lived experiences of exclusion in their communities, their neighbourhoods, and in decision-making in general.

While the improved sense of community post-earthquakes in Christchurch has been well documented in media and academic reports (Thornley et al., 2013) the social divisions present in the city have not been discussed as much, though they were a particular concern for youth in the study. Although a number of young people agreed that there was an improved sense of community in the city post-earthquakes, many young people still wanted more of this or did not feel connected to their neighbours and the people around them. This desire for connection is further evidenced by a recent study on youth loneliness, that showed young people aged between 18-25 to have the highest self-reported levels of loneliness, despite perceptions of them being a 'highly connected' generation (Statistics NZ, 2010). That certain groups reported feeling particularly marginalised and excluded, as expressed by those in the youth participation focus group and other young people of non-European ethnicities and cultures in this study, shows that Christchurch can do a lot more to support multiculturalism and enabling an inclusive, just and equal city.

Young people's sense of community is described in the literature as an aspect of social capital, and an important part of recovery post-disaster (Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015). Some youth in this study appeared to have a greater sense of community than others, and there was a pattern for these young people to be aged between 12-18, female, and to have lived in Christchurch their whole lives. Those who moved more recently to Christchurch all expressed greater difficulty 'fitting in'. This chapter largely concerned youth experiences of social exclusion in a variety of ways, and young people's unhappiness with community wellbeing and high levels of mental health issues in

Christchurch has been heavily backed up by scholars and in the media (Liberty et al., 2016). While there are local and national efforts to affect change in this area in particular (e.g. All Right, 2018), less work is being done on the social divisions between generations, stigma and stereotypes of youth because of their age, and building a sense of community, expressed as important in their wellbeing and recovery by the young people in this study. Overall, this chapter further demonstrates the importance of decision makers understanding young people's needs and aspirations for themselves and their communities, particularly so post-disaster when there is more of an opportunity than ever to effect change.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reinforced the importance youth in the study placed on people, in the regeneration, in their city and in their neighbourhoods. Young people spoke passionately of their desire for inclusion, both for themselves and for everyone in Christchurch, and for people to be placed at the centre of the rebuild post-disaster. Ultimately the aspiration for acceptance and belonging was a major driver of youth discussions about community and connections, multiculturalism and diversity.

Youth in this research wanted the wellbeing of people in the city to be prioritised, not only in terms of belonging and inclusion but in terms of health. Mental health was the centre of discussions around wellbeing, as was ensuring that individuals' basic needs were being met. Difficulties around these needs not being met were linked to the exclusion that young people felt both personally and that they witnessed amongst people close to them and in the wider Christchurch community.

Young people also talked of their experiences of exclusion in the city, and social divisions that they saw in terms of age and generations. Discussions of stereotypes, discrimination, and the silos between people of different cultures were common in the interviews, and a major concern that young people had about their city and communities. Youth expressed their aspirations for Christchurch to become a more diverse city post-earthquakes that is embracing of multiculturalism and allows people of all ethnicities to feel like they belong and are accepted.

Overall, young people had visions for Christchurch to be a people-centred city where 'everyone feels like its home'. They aspired to a place that was more accepting, with less stigma and stereotypes around age, culture and class, more connected, where people knew their neighbours, felt content, healthy and happy with their lives, and where differences between people could be transcended. Ray summed up his visions for Christchurch succinctly:

Kendall: What are your visions for around here and for Christchurch as a city?

Ray: A diverse, open people-based city - that basically says itself. A city where no minority is being put down for something - is being stereotyped - youth are being given the opportunity to be able to speak up for themselves and the city is based around what the people want.



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Conclusion and Recommendations

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### 7.1 Summary of Research

In alignment with a 'right's approach' to youth participation (United Nations, 1989), this thesis sought to address the gap in listening to young people's voices on the ground after a disaster and examine the perspectives of a group of Christchurch young people on their participation in decision-making and public life. Using a qualitative, case study approach, I conducted 14 interviews and focus groups with a total of 18 youth. These young people were aged between 12-24 years, and 14 of them were involved in youth participation groups in Christchurch and considered themselves to be particularly engaged. Specifically, this research aimed to examine their perspectives about Christchurch, the regeneration, decision-making, and their opportunities to participate post-disaster, as well as their aspirations and visions for the city and themselves during the recovery period. I aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do young people view decision-making in Christchurch post-disaster and what are their perspectives on youth civic engagement?
2. What are the barriers to engaging in city life and decision-making in Christchurch that they perceive as young people?
3. How do youth perceive Christchurch as a city and the regeneration currently?
4. What are the aspirations they express for the city and its recovery?
5. What are young people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion in Christchurch post-disaster?

6. What supports and challenges do young people express related to their overall wellbeing and recovery post-disaster?

The central finding was that despite having sought out opportunities for youth leadership and advocacy roles post-disaster, and despite decision-makers intentions to include young people, youth reported frustration that they are excluded from decision-making and public life. Youth in the study described these feelings of exclusion as political, physical and social. In terms of political exclusion, many young people reported feeling that they were not listened to by decision-makers, that they were frustrated by the lack of change they saw around them, and that they struggled to feel like they could 'make a difference'. Frustrated agency was a prominent feature in these discussions (Hayward, 2012), though many young people's desire to participate in local politics and the regeneration despite the barriers was still evident. Participation has been shown in the literature to be a key factor in inclusive recovery post-disaster, with calls for young people's agency and ability to contribute to recovery to be recognised and supported (Peek, 2008). Many young people in this study expressed their desire to be more meaningfully engaged with decision-making in the city and to contribute to the Christchurch regeneration. They also discussed the barriers to their own participation in Christchurch post-disaster, and the following section will make some recommendations in light of this to that could contribute to the development of more inclusive, participatory recovery processes in the city.

In terms of physical exclusion, some young people reported feeling excluded from their city and neighbourhood. They discussed feeling that suburbs in Christchurch were divided due to social stratification, feeling unwelcome in certain parts of the city, and a lack of youth-friendly public spaces for them to be part of. Attachment to place has been shown to be an important aspect of young people's recovery post-disaster (Cox, Scannell, Heykoop, Tobin-Gurley, & Peek, 2017) and their physical and geographic exclusion is a likely consequence of young people not being meaningfully included in the regeneration and urban planning of a city post-disaster. Youth in the study discussed aspects of place in Christchurch that were particularly supportive of their own wellbeing and recovery and that they envisioned the city having more of in the future; namely, green spaces and gardens, a great public transport system, and the city becoming a 'place to be'

(having places and spaces, activities, vibrancy to attract people in). They described the social divisions between suburbs, stigma of certain neighbourhoods, exclusion from the city centre, and poor-quality housing and high levels of homelessness as particularly concerning for them, and aspects of Christchurch that were challenging to the community's wellbeing and recovery after the earthquakes. The following section makes some recommendations based upon this and other existing literature that may reflect local young people's desires for the city and regeneration.

In addition to feeling politically and physically excluded from Christchurch and the regeneration post-disaster, young people in this study also described feeling socially excluded from the community and people around them. Youth reported a sense of prejudice and stereotyping due to their age, class and/or ethnicity that contributed to feeling that they 'did not belong' in the city. They described social divisions, youth mental health issues, and a sense that people and the community were not being put 'at the heart' of regeneration efforts as being particularly challenging for them post-disaster. Youth also described their aspirations for a greater sense of community, improved 'neighbourliness', and promoting diversity and inclusion and awareness of all cultures in Christchurch. They aspired for social divisions and stereotyping to be lessened, and people's wellbeing to be prioritised, so that people in Christchurch could all feel 'included, and like they belong'. This desire for inclusion, wellbeing and belonging was reflected throughout the interviews with young people, and in the following section I will make recommendations for a more inclusive Christchurch recovery based on the views of youth in this study.

## 7.2 Recommendations

The following is a list of key recommendations for decision-makers during the recovery period in Christchurch, based on the views of young people themselves in this research. In light of their perceived exclusion from decision-making, spaces and places, and the community, these recommendations are focused on promoting Christchurch young people's participation, inclusion and place attachment in the city, and their sense of community and feelings of belonging, that literature has shown to have positive impacts on young people's recovery and overall wellbeing (Scannell, Cox, Fletcher & Heykoop, 2016). Recommendations are made in three key areas: inclusive decision-making; inclusive spaces and places; and inclusive communities.

### Inclusive Decision-Making

- Encourage young people's participation in local decision-making and the regeneration. This should go beyond formal groups, and follow best-practice youth engagement (see Canterbury Youth Workers Collective, 2015; Le Va, 2016).
- Continue to ask young people and the wider community about their aspirations for the future of their city, and show them how these have (or have not) been taken into account when making decisions
- Keep the community informed through multiple accessible platforms about what is happening in the regeneration and how they can be involved
- Invite Christchurch young people to participate in decision-making, and provide opportunities for this and physical spaces for them to come together
- Foster connections with youth participation groups and other young people in Christchurch with decision-makers going out into the schools and communities and introducing themselves
- Make engagement opportunities accessible for young people, less formal and less intimidating (e.g consider timing, accessibility, promotion, friendliness)
- Potential for youth participation groups to run workshops with decision-makers on understanding youth needs, valuing and respecting young people, and fostering stronger connections between decision-makers and youth
- Increase in positive media in Christchurch about young people may help to address stigma of youth at a more community-wide level

### Inclusive Spaces and Places

- Ensure development and promotion of free public spaces in the city that are welcoming of young people
- Prioritise free or cheap events and activities that make the city 'more vibrant'
- Continue to emphasise Christchurch as 'the Garden City', promote existing green spaces, and continue to develop and add to these with the regeneration
- Consider ways to bring people from different suburbs in Christchurch together to remove barriers and foster a wider sense of community
- Address the disparity of treatment between east and west, and prioritise greater inclusion of the east
- Prioritise a public transport system in the city that appeals to youth needs and aspirations (eg in terms of price, accessibility, ease of use)
- Continue to work on reducing homelessness rates in the city
- Consider implementing a housing 'warrant of fitness' or similar initiative to hold landlords to account about quality of rentals (Christchurch Youth Action Plan, 2017).
- Positive media and promotion of Christchurch is important as the regeneration continues to show new, exciting spaces and opportunities that make Christchurch an attractive place to be

### Inclusive Communities

- Prioritise the health and wellbeing of young people and the wider community post-disaster. These effects are long-lasting and require additional resources and care (New Zealand Government, 2011)
- Ensure that the community feels prioritised post-disaster and included long-term in the regeneration. Provide ongoing opportunities for the community to participate, feedback, and share their ideas.
- Consider ways that local Community Boards could help to promote a greater sense of community in Christchurch suburbs, including initiatives that encourage people to know their neighbours (see Francis, Giles-Corti, Wood & Knuiman, 2012)
- Promote the diversity of cultures in Christchurch, and encourage greater cultural awareness and understanding
- Ensure ideas from the multicultural strategy (Christchurch City Council, 2017) are put into practice on the ground, with regular reporting on progress towards 'Diversity and Inclusion' within the city
- Ensure different cultures and ethnicities are represented in local decision-making and advertising within the city
- Address the social divisions present in Christchurch, between age, class and ethnicity, through acknowledgement and action. Work with the local community and young people to consider their voices on what may help promote greater social cohesion

## 7.3 Implications

This research has found that young people interviewed for this study want to participate and be part of post-disaster recovery, and it is clear that they have the desire, energy and ideas to be an asset to the Christchurch community. The sense of exclusion that these young people feel builds upon literature that suggests youth agency may not be being recognised to its fullest potential on

the ground after disasters, and that realising and encouraging young people's engagement in post-disaster recovery may have positive effects on their own wellbeing and sense of belonging (Oliver, Collin, Burns & Nicholas, 2006). This research contributes qualitative insights into what drives these young people's sense of exclusion and disempowerment in the city eight years after the Christchurch earthquakes. Results of this study contribute to the literature that challenges the narrative that young people are politically apathetic (Norris, 2004; Nissen, 2017) and adds to our understandings of the way that disasters can concentrate power amongst certain groups (Hayward, 2012), in this case excluding young people across the social spectrum. As well as the contributions this research may make to the literature on children and disasters, and the literature on youth participation in urban planning, this case study may have more direct benefits and applications for local decision-makers in Christchurch. The findings of this study have led to the above recommendations concerning how to foster youth inclusion and participation in local decision-making and public life, which may be utilised by decision makers in a variety of organisations in Christchurch to contribute to more inclusive recovery efforts for young people and the community moving forward.

## 7.4 Limitations and Future Research

Before concluding, it is important to briefly recognise the limitations of this research. Firstly, the sample size (18) was small, and larger studies are needed to reach data saturation and enable findings to be generalised. As the sample largely involved young people from youth participation groups, comparisons cannot be made between the perspectives of these young people and less engaged young people in Christchurch. Secondly, as a case study, this research has applications for local decision-makers and the community in Christchurch, yet less generalisability to other areas post-disaster. While there are similarities amongst youth perspectives in other emerging research (Cox et al., 2017), I reiterate along with other scholars in disaster studies the importance of research such as this being conducted in its own context, to allow the unique ideas of the local community to emerge (Bartlett, 2008). Finally, this study is somewhat limited by its scope, as much of the data gathered in interviews needed to be condensed to fit the requirements of this thesis. Despite this, I believe the themes and key arguments presented in this research were able to put

forward the main perspectives and aspirations of the young people who participated, and effectively represented their voices.

Future research is needed in the areas of youth participation post-disaster to build upon the findings of this thesis, particularly concerning young people's exclusion and ways they could be more included in recovery after disasters. Research on youth and disasters could more holistically consider the role of people, places and politics in young people's wellbeing and recovery, as all of these interrelate with each other and have significant effects on the lives of young people. In addition, research with a larger sample size could allow for greater comparison of the similarities and differences in young people's perceptions and aspirations, and international research could compare youth responses in different cities around the world that have experienced disasters.

## 7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has supported the literature that shows that young people are often capable and eager to participate in community decision making, especially after disasters (Peek, 2008; O'Steen and Johnson, 2010; Cox et al., 2017; Anderson, 2005; Mitchell, Tanner & Haynes, 2009). The young people interviewed in this research expressed strong desires to participate in local decision-making and the regeneration of Christchurch, although they identified political, physical and social barriers and divisions that prevented their meaningful engagement. The effects of this exclusion on young people's agency, wellbeing, and overall sense of belonging were evident in their self-reported frustration and concern, and further steps are needed by Christchurch decision-makers and the local community to address these barriers, in order to promote a more inclusive post-disaster recovery for young people in the future.



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Interview Questions

### Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch, New Zealand

*Masters of Policy and Governance (MPAG)*

Kendall Lattin

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#### Interview Questions

##### Explanation and Introduction (5 minutes)

###### 1. Introduction

*Thanks for coming along, I'll just introduce myself to start with. I'm Kendall, I'm doing my Masters in Policy and Governance at the University of Canterbury and I am really interested in hearing what young people in Christchurch have to say about their communities and city.*

###### 2. Explanation

*A quick explanation of my research. I'm looking at what young people like about Christchurch, any issues you might have, how you think that decisions are made here, and what visions you have for the future. I'm interviewing young people like yourself, aged between 12-24 to help me answer these questions.*

*This study has been approved by the HEC and your participation is completely voluntary, you are able to withdraw at any time. This interview won't take any longer than 50 minutes. I will audio record our talk to help with my memory when I write up my thesis, and will send you a transcript of this in the next couple of weeks that you can edit or add things to if you would like to. All your information will be kept confidential, and your name or organisation name will not be made public. My thesis will be a public document, and I will also send you a summary of the results.*

*If you have any questions or complaints, you are welcome to contact me, my supervisors, or the Human Ethics Committee, and the contact details are on your information sheet.*

###### 3. Do you have any questions?

###### 4. Are you still happy to go ahead with the interview?

## 5. Outline interview structure

*So the interview will be in three parts. In the first part we will talk about your thoughts on Christchurch as a city and the regeneration or rebuild process. In the second part we will talk about decision-making, and how decisions get made here. And in the third and final part we will talk about how young people like yourself engage in decision-making.*

## 6. Encouragement

*Before we start, just to remind you that you are the expert here. There is no right or wrong way to interpret these questions and answer them, and a lot of them are pretty open questions so you can take them in lots of different directions. I'm just interested to hear what you think, and your thoughts or opinions about Christchurch and young people's participation in decision making.*

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### Part One: Your City and Regeneration (20 minutes)

CITY

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself, where you live and what would be a typical day for you?
2. What place or places do you spend a lot of time in in Christchurch?
  - a. What do they mean to you?
3. If you were to describe Christchurch in a few words or sentences to someone who had never been here before, what would you say?
4. What are some of the things that you like best about living around here?
  - a. Why?
5. What are the issues or problems that you see around here?
  - a. What issues or problems do you think other people think about around here?
6. What are the biggest challenges that you see yourself facing in Christchurch?
  - a. What about the biggest challenges that you see young people more broadly in Christchurch facing?
  - b. What about the biggest challenges that you see your own community facing?
  - c. What about the biggest challenges that you see Christchurch as a city facing?
7. What are your visions for around here and for Christchurch as a city?
  - a. If you could wave a magic wand and anything was possible, what would you change about your community and city?
    - i. Why?
  - b. What visions do you have for yourself and other young people living here?
    - i. Why?

1. If someone asked you about the regeneration of Christchurch and how it's going, what would you say?
  2. What does the rebuild mean for you?
  3. What are your favourite parts about the regeneration of Christchurch?
    - a. Why?
  4. What would you change about the way things are going?
    - a. Why?
- 

#### Part Two: Decision-making (10 minutes)

1. Who makes decisions around here?
  2. Do they listen to young people like you?
  3. How do you think change happens around here?
    - a. What sort of change happens?
  4. How could you and other young people make a difference about the issues that matter to you?
    - a. What barriers are there to this happening?
    - b. Can you think of examples where this is already happening?
  5. If you could speak to someone who could change things in your city, what would you say to them?
- 

#### Part Three: Youth engagement (10 minutes)

1. What do you think when people say: 'young people are disengaged and don't care about decision-making'?
  - a. Why?
2. What would an engaged young person look like to you?
3. Would you consider yourself to be an engaged young person?
  - a. Why or why not?
  - b. What stops you from participating more?

- c. What do you think about those young people who are really engaged with decision-making in Christchurch?
    - d. What do you think about those young people who don't want to engage with decision-making in Christchurch?
  - 4. What do you engage with around here?
    - a. What are you passionate about about this place?
  - 5. What are your visions for young people in Christchurch engaging in decision-making?
    - a. Why or why not?
    - b. How might this happen?
  - 6. If you had the option of having a civics education workshop at your school to help you learn more about your community and how decisions are made, what are some of the things that you personally think are important to include?
    - a. What do you wish you knew more about?
    - b. What would you like to discuss or debate with others?
    - c. How would you like a civics education workshop to be run?
- 

#### Closing (5 minutes)

- 1. Is there anything else you want to say?
  - 2. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to, who is not as part of decision-making processes in the city?
  - 3. Just a reminder that you can email me with any questions that you have. I will send you the transcript in the next few weeks and you are welcome to add anything else that you think of to it.
  - 4. Thank you!
-



## Appendix 2: Letters and Consent forms



### Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch

Dear Christchurch Youth Council

My name is Kendall Lattin, I am a Masters student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Canterbury. I am writing you to see if you would be willing to consent to hosting my study with your organisation.

My study seeks to understand the visions that young people have for Christchurch and its development. I would like to find out what young people like about Christchurch, what changes they would like to see, and how they think their voices can be heard in local government decision making.

I am asking if you could make a short announcement about the study to your members, and then make forms available for young people who are interested (a sample announcement and copies of these forms are included).

For this study I would like to interview 8 young people from your organisation, aged between 12-24 years. The commitment for each participant would involve a 50 minute semi-structured interview at a place and time that is convenient to them, such as a public library discussion room.

Interested participants would also be given handouts to pass on to people in their friendship groups who may be interested in participating, who may then contact the researcher if they interested in being interviewed.

I would greatly appreciate it if CYC would consent to announcing this study to your members and allowing interested young people to pick up the forms attached. If you are interested in participating, please email me at [kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz), or text/phone me on 021-026-58065.

If you do consent, I'll bring round the forms to be distributed to your members. I am happy to speak with you and interested members about my study. You will receive a summary of the study after it is finished.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)). My project is being carried out under the supervision of Associate Professor Bronwyn Hayward (Department of Political Science) [bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz) and Associate Professor Kathleen Liberty (Department of Health Sciences) <[kathleen.liberty@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kathleen.liberty@canterbury.ac.nz)>. You can also contact them if you have any questions or concerns.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Warm regards,  
Kendall Lattin

## Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch

A Masters of Policy and Governance Research Project Conducted by Kendall Lattin

By signing this form, I consent to making an announcement and distributing forms to interested young people.

In giving this consent, I acknowledge that:

1. I have received information about the study from the researcher, which I have understood.
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about the study and these have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I understand that young peoples' participation in the study is voluntary.
4. I understand that if participants are under 16 years and/or still at high school, parents will be sent information about the study and will be required to sign consent forms before their son/daughter can participate in the study.
5. I understand that the researcher will collect the signed consent forms and arrange to contact the participants after they have provided consent.
6. I understand that all information/responses provided by participants' will be confidential, and the identity of the organisation will be kept confidential.
7. I understand that the researcher will write about the results of the study in partial fulfilment of the requirements of their degree, and in summary form for CYC, the city council, and parents and participants.
8. I understand that all materials for this study will be stored securely by the researcher in the Department of Political Science at the University of Canterbury and destroyed five years after the study is completed.

Name: (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

*To the chairperson(s):* This announcement may be re-worded to fit the tone suitable for your organisation. It may be put on a Facebook Page, sent via email, or announced during a meeting.

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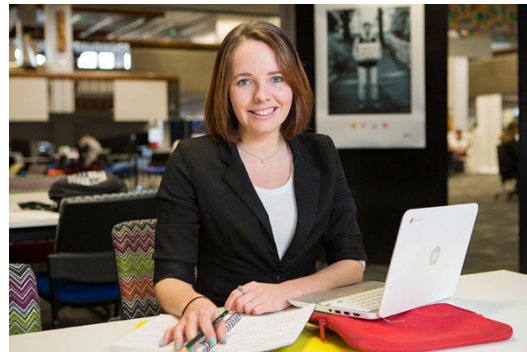


Kendall Lattin, a Masters student at the University of Canterbury, is conducting a project, and would like the help of CYC members aged between 12 and 24.

She wants to hear from you about: what you like Christchurch as a city, what you want for the future of Christchurch, and how to get there. This project is called:

### **Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch**

Participating in this research means being part of a 50 minute interview with Kendall about your ideas for Christchurch's future. Only 8 of you can participate. If you are interested, contact [chchyouthcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:chchyouthcouncil@gmail.com) for more details.



Thank you for picking up this form. You must be interested in my study!

### **Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch**

My name is Kendall Lattin. I am a Masters student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Canterbury.

In my research, I want to understand what young people think about Christchurch, and the visions that you have for the future of this city.

Research that listens to youth voices can help to ensure better political decisions and actions are made, and developments can meet the needs of Christchurch young people.

The research involves a 50 minute semi-structured interview with me in a public location, where you share your ideas about Christchurch's future while I listen. I will also audio record the interview to help my memory. You will get a copy of the transcript of the interview and can add any additional comments to this too.

The interview will take place at a time of day and location that suits both you and the researcher. Participation is completely voluntary and you are able to withdraw from the study at any time, including after the discussion.

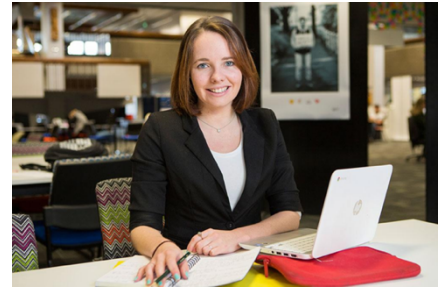
If you are under 16 and/or still at high school and would like to participate in this research, the next step is to take this packet of paperwork home and discuss it with your parent/s or caregivers. This includes information for them, and consent forms. This is to ensure that all research participants are fully protected under the ethical procedures of the University of Canterbury. If you are 16 or over and not at high school, please read the study information and sign the consent form.

You can email me ([kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)) or text me on 021-026-58065 with any questions you have, or speak with the CYC chairperson(s) about these.

Once all the forms are signed, please bring them back to the chairs, and I'll pick them up and make contact with you about a time that would suit to chat. I look forward to meeting you in that case!

Many thanks,

Kendall Lattin



## Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch

Dear parent of an interested and involved young person!

My name is Kendall Lattin, and I am a Masters student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Canterbury.

My study seeks to understand the visions and challenges that young people have about Christchurch. This includes: what they like about Christchurch, what visions they have for the future of Christchurch, and how they think local decision-making happens.

Christchurch Youth Council has consented to this study taking place with members, and your son/daughter heard an announcement about the study and picked up these forms to bring them home.

If you and your child both consent, your son/daughter would attend a 50 minute interview with me at a time and place that suits them. I will audio record this to aid my memory. The transcript will be used to write up my thesis, but no actual names of participants or the name of the organisation will be used.

Research that listens to youth voices can help to ensure better political decisions and actions are made, and can also help strengthen our understandings of democracy and empower young people. This research will have implications for local policy and governance, as developments can be tailored to the needs of Christchurch young people and their local environment directly.

Please discuss this with your daughter/son, and read all the information on the next page. If you both agree, sign the attached consent forms. The forms should be returned to the CYC chairperson(s) within a week.

My project is being carried out under the supervision of Associate Professor Bronwyn Hayward (Department of Political Science) [bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz) and Associate Professor Kathleen Liberty (Department of Health Sciences) <[kathleen.liberty@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kathleen.liberty@canterbury.ac.nz)>. You can also contact them if you have any questions or concerns.

Many thanks for your consideration!

Kendall Lattin  
[kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

## **Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch**

A Masters of Policy and Governance Research Project Conducted by Kendall Lattin

*Please read this information sheet in full before making a decision.*

### **Study background**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

This study is being conducted by Kendall Lattin, a Masters student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Canterbury.

My project is being carried out under the supervision of Associate Professor Bronwyn Hayward, in the Department of Political Science. She can be contacted at [bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz) and will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation

### **Purpose**

The aim of this research is to learn from young people what they think about their city, the visions that they have for the future and how they think decisions are made and young people's voices can be heard.

### **Participants**

Young people aged 12-24 years old saw/heard an announcement about the study and decided they would like to participate. Further information about the study was made available through the CYC chairperson(s) or members. I am seeking 16 participants in total, 8 young people from CYC and 8 young people from their friendship networks. If more youth want to take part, a coin flip method will be used to randomly select participants.

Youth who are under 16 and/or still at school will also require parental consent to participate. Young people 16 and over who are no longer at high school do not require parental consent.

### **Procedure**

Interested young people will participate in a 50 minute interview with the researcher. The discussion will occur at a time and place suitable to the participant and will be audio recorded.

The discussion will be open-ended and cover the student's views about Christchurch as a city and the visions that they have for the future, the issues that concern them, and how they believe change can happen.

After participating in the interview, the participants will receive a transcript of the audio recording to review. They will have the option of adding or removing comments from the transcript.

### **Risks, voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw**

There are no risks involved in taking part in this research.

Participation is completely voluntary. If both parents and participants consent to participate in this study, participants will have the right to withdraw at any time, including before or after the interview. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If they do withdraw, I will remove any information

they have provided.

### ***Confidentiality***

I will be writing up the information from the discussion for my Master's thesis. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library. The results may be shared with other organisations, such as the City Council. A summary of the results will be shared with you, if you wish.

While the results of this project will be publicly available, you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of the information gathered for this study. Names of participants and the name of the organisation will not be made public. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used to disguise participant's identities in any published material.

Information gathered during the study will be kept on University premises, in a locked filing cabinet for five years after the completion of the thesis. Data will only be accessed by the researcher. You may receive a copy of the project results as noted on the consent form.

### ***Complaints Procedure***

Participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([humanethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

### ***Consent Forms***

If both parents (if young person is under 16 and/or still at high school) and interested participants have read all of the above information and would like to participate in the study, please complete the attached consent forms and return these to the chairperson of CYC within one week.

Thank you for considering this, and please feel free to contact me at any time about the study ([kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)).

Many thanks,  
Kendall Lattin

***Please Retain This Information Sheet For Your Records***



## Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch

A Masters of Policy and Governance Research Project Conducted by Kendall Lattin

### Parent Consent Form

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what is required of my child if I consent to them taking part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and my child may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions my child provides will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- ☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after *five* years.
- ☐ I understand the risks associated with my child taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher [Kendall Lattin, [kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)] or supervisor [Bronwyn Hayward, [Bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz)] for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz))
- ☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- ☐ By signing below, I consent to my son/daughter participating in this research project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (for report of findings, if applicable):  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Please give this consent form to your child to return with their own assent form to the chairperson of the Christchurch Youth Council.*

Kendall Lattin



## Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imaginations of Young People in Christchurch

A Masters of Policy and Governance Research Project Conducted by Kendall Lattin

### Participant Assent/Consent form for participation in interview

1. I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I have discussed this with my parent, who has consented to my participation by signing the parent consent form.
3. I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
4. I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
5. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded.
6. I understand that any published or reported results will not identify me.
7. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
8. I understand that all information collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.
9. I understand that I can contact the researcher, Kendall Lattin, <[kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:kendall.lattin@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)> or supervisor, Bronwyn Hayward, <[bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:bronwyn.hayward@canterbury.ac.nz)> for further information.
10. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch ([human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)).

*Please complete the information below to help the researcher prepare for the discussion group. The researcher will contact you to figure out the best time to schedule the discussion.*

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(1) Are you: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other (2) Age: \_\_\_\_\_

(3) What ethnic group (or groups) do you identify with? \_\_\_\_\_

(e.g. Māori, NZ European, Chinese)

(4) How long have you lived in Christchurch? \_\_\_\_\_ years

(b) What suburb do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_

(c) What high school did/do you attend? \_\_\_\_\_

(5) How can you be contacted? Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ or Email: \_\_\_\_\_ or  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are at high school:**

(6) What year are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

(7) Do you plan to stay in Christchurch after you finish school? Yes / No

(8) Do you plan to vote in the elections when you turn 18? Yes / No

**If you are finished high school:**

(6) What are you currently doing? (e.g. University, work) \_\_\_\_\_

(7) What is your highest educational qualification? \_\_\_\_\_

(8) Have you voted in the elections? Yes/No

**Signature**

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

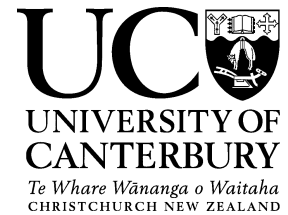
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name) (Signature) (Date)

Nickname or False name (to be used in published data): \_\_\_\_\_

Option: I would like to receive a report of the findings of the study in early 2018. Yes/No

Email (to send you the report) \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 3: Ethics Approval Letter



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson  
Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588  
Email: [human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

Ref: HEC 2017/110

17 October 2017

Kendall Lattin  
Political Sciences and International Relations  
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Kendall

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal “Youth Voice and Active Citizenship: Exploring the Civic Imagination of Young People in Christchurch” has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

*R. Robinson*  
pp.

Associate Professor Jane Maidment  
**Chair**  
*University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee*